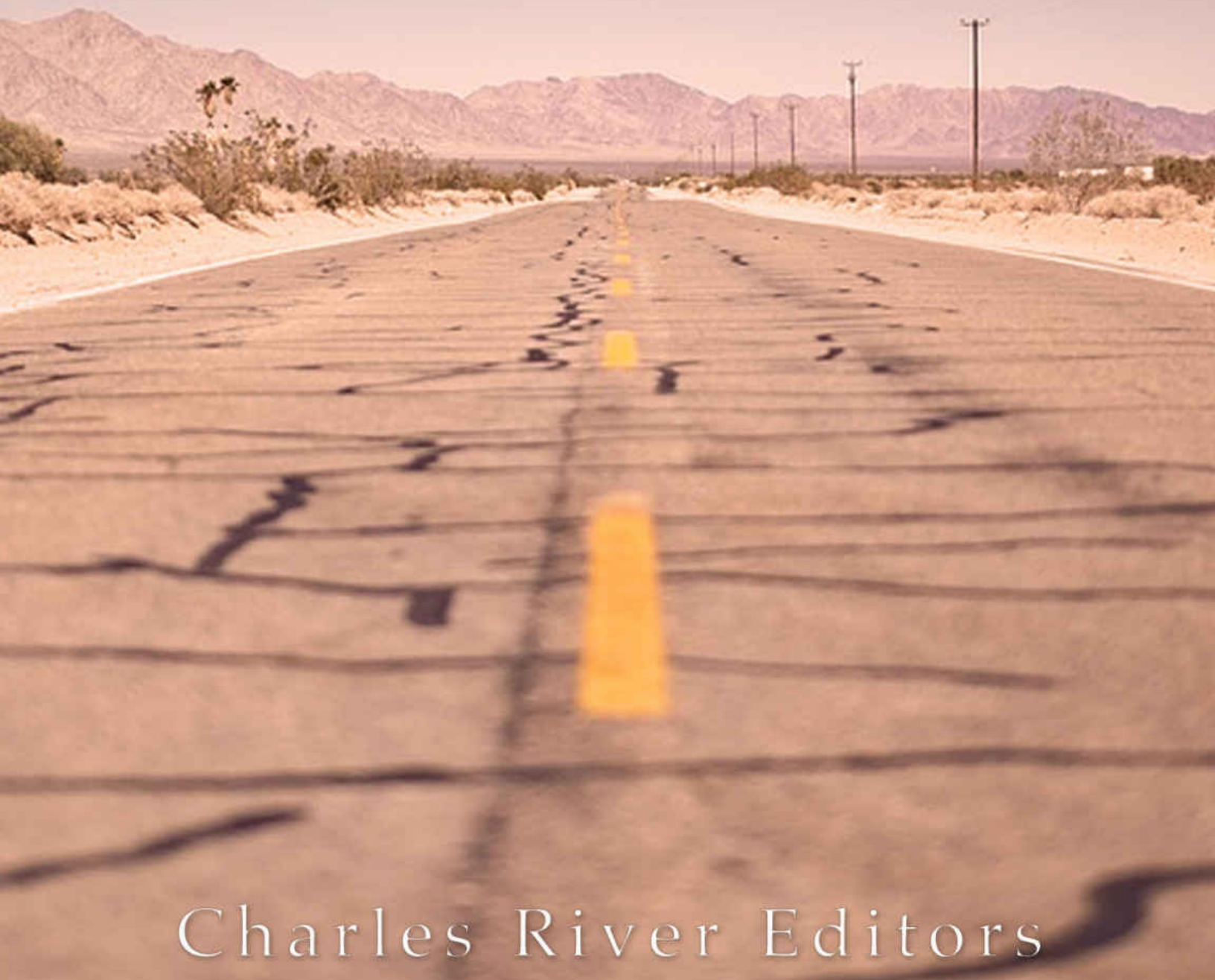
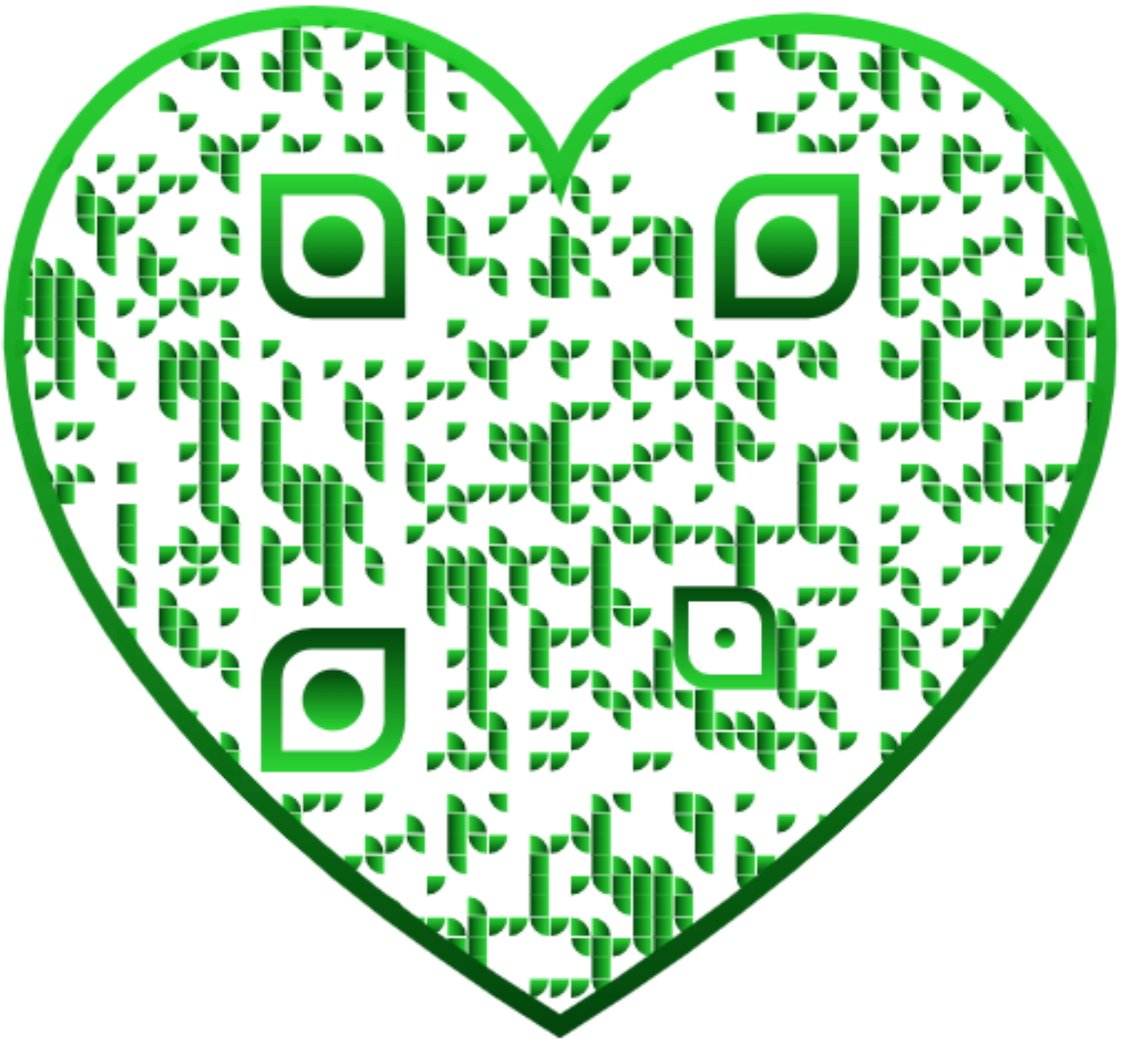
Roswell & Area 51

The History and Mystery of the Two Most Famous UFO Conspiracy Sites in America



Charles River Editors



Roswell & Area 51: The History and Mystery of the Two Most Famous UFO Conspiracy Sites in America

By Charles River Editors

An Aerial Shot of Area 51

Introduction

Area 51

An aerial view of Area 51 and Groom Lake

"We flew over it and within thirty seconds, you knew that was the place ... it was right by a dry lake. Man alive, we looked at that lake, and we all looked at each other. It was another Edwards, so we wheeled around, landed on that lake, taxied up to one end of it. It was a perfect natural landing field ... as smooth as a billiard table without anything being done to it". – Kelly Johnson, Lockheed's

U-2 spy plane designer

"The shape of OXCART was unprecedented, with its wide, disk-like fuselage designed to carry vast quantities of fuel. Commercial pilots cruising over Nevada at dusk would look up and see the bottom of OXCART whiz by at 2,000-plus mph. The aircraft's titanium body, moving as fast as a bullet, would reflect the sun's rays in a way that could make anyone think, UFO." – Annie Jacobsen, "The Road to Area 51"

Unlike many aspects of other conspiracy theories, Area 51 is a frequently-documented fact. UFO seekers can theorize to their heart's content about what might have gone on there or whether Area 51 even exists, but Area 51 is quite real.

In simple terms, it is a place where the United States government conducted—and continues to conduct—tests, in a remote environment where civilians are not in jeopardy and enemies from foreign countries cannot observe or sabotage weaponry or strategy the U.S. might use against them. Assuming that other countries were doing the same, the U.S. also used this remote site to test equipment like the U-2 that would make it possible to spy on other countries and for other countries to do harm to the United States.

In civilian terms, it is merely a location on a map in a remote part of the Nevada desert, near the tiny hamlet of Rachel. The tiny little group of local residents is so small that one source notes that Rachel has never even been home to a post office.

Roswell

Leased Wire
Associated Press

Roswell Daily Record

RECORD PHONES
Business Office 2288
News Department
2287

ROSWELL, NEW MEXICO, TUESDAY, JULY 8, 1947

10c PER COPY.

RAAF Captures Flying Saucer On Ranch in Roswell Region

Movies as Usual

Levees broke and flood waters rolled into the town of Grand Tower, Ill., but while the rescuer of the movie theater sweeps out the water that has entered the lobby these youngsters are standing in line for tickets for the night's performance. (AP Wirephoto).

Claims Army Is Stacking Courts Martial

Indiana Senator Lays Protest Before Patterson

House Passes Tax Slash by Large Margin

Defeat Amendment By Demos to Remove Many from Rolls

Security Council Paves Way to Talks On Arms Reductions

No Details of Flying Disk Are Revealed

Roswell Hardware Man and Wife Report Disk Seen

Ex-King Carol Weds Mme. Lupescu

Former King Carol of Rumania and Mme. Elena Lupescu relax aboard the S. S. America bound for Cuba and Mexico in May, 1941. A member of Carol's household in the days in Mexico said the ex-king and his companion for 23 years in exile were recently married at their hotel Copendhave Palace suite. (AP Wirephoto).

Some of Soviet Satellites May Attend Paris Meeting

Roswellians Have Differing Opinions On Flying Saucers

American League Wins All-Star Game

Miners and Operators Sign Highest Wage Pact in History

Army Reveals It Has Flying Disc Found On Ranch In New Mexico

ROSWELL, (N. M.), July 8.—(AP)—The army air forces here today announced a flying disc has been found on a ranch near Roswell and is in possession of the army. Lieutenant Warren Haught, public information officer of the Roswell Army Air Field, announced the find had been made "sometime last week" and had been turned over to the air field through cooperation of the sheriff's office.

Higher Headquarters

"It was inspected at the Roswell Army Air Field and subsequently loaned" by Major Jesse A. Marrell of the 509th Bomb Group intelligence office in Roswell to higher headquarters."

The army gave no other details.

Haught's statement:

"The many rumors regarding the flying discs became a reality yesterday when the intelligence office of the 509th (atomic) Bomb Group of the 8th Air Force, Roswel Army Air Field, was fortunate enough to gain possession of a disc through the cooperation of one of the local ranchers and the sheriff's office of Chaves County.

"The flying object landed on a ranch near Roswell some time last week. Not having phone facilities, the rancher stored the disc until such time as he was able to contact the sheriff's office, who in turn notified Major Jesse A. Marcel of the 509th Bomb Group Intelligence office.

Reported At Roswell

"Action was immediately taken and the disc was picked up at the rancher's home. It was inspected at the Roswell Army Air Field and subsequently loaned by Major Marcel to higher headquarters.

The rancher's name and the location of his place were withheld.

County Walsh of radio station KGFS which provided first news of the announcement said only Major Marcel, Colonel W. H. Blanchard, commanding officer at Roswell, and the rancher had seen the object here.

The sheriff, Walsh reported, upon receiving word from the rancher went immediately to the intelligence officer at Roswell Field.

"The many rumors regarding the flying disc became a reality yesterday when the intelligence office of the 509th Bomb group of the Eighth Air Force, Roswell Army Air Field, was fortunate enough to gain possession of a disc through the cooperation of one of the local ranchers and the sheriff's office of Chaves County. The flying object landed on a ranch near Roswell sometime last week. Not having phone facilities, the rancher stored the disc until such time as he was able to contact the sheriff's office, who in turn notified Maj. Jesse A. Marcel of the 509th Bomb Group Intelligence Office. Action was immediately taken and the disc was picked up at the rancher's home. It was inspected at the Roswell

Army Air Field and subsequently loaned by Major Marcel to higher headquarters." – A press release issued by the Roswell Army Air Field, July 8, 1947

The essence of the event commonly known as the Roswell Crash is that someone saw something in the sky during the summer of 1947. Days later someone else found some odd foil, paper and wood on the grounds of a ranch in the New Mexico desert nearly a hundred miles from Roswell. A day or two after that, the debris was taken to a military airbase in Roswell, New Mexico, where it remained overnight before the military flew it to another airbase in Ohio. The story of the Roswell Crash tends to focus on New Mexico, not on the traveling debris found on the ground.

Ironically, the Roswell Crash never happened in Roswell. That's not to say there was no 1947 crash. Something did appear on the ground that appeared to have come from the sky—but it wasn't found anywhere near Roswell. Part of what was found was eventually moved to the airbase in Roswell where it remained overnight, inspiring the name the Roswell Crash.

Few things in American history are as controversial as Roswell. The one undeniable fact is that something happened near Roswell, New Mexico, in 1947, but beyond that, the facts become murky as memories and evidence lose their luster over the years. That said, the impact of an unidentified object continues to mystify residents, visitors and the curious, and it has not only put Roswell on the map but has kept it there for thousands of tourists.

At the very least, the Roswell Crash has become a meme. Even among those who do not believe there was a crash at all, the vast majority of people recognize the reference especially after the television show The X-Files[1] and assume that it allegedly did (or did not) crash within the city limits of Roswell. To most people,

Roswell means UFOs.

The story of how the Roswell Crash became so widely known is a complicated one. Perhaps part of the reason was due to that specific time in history. In 1947, America was undergoing tremendous change. Much of that change involved secrecy and disillusionment. Americans learned that on December 7, 1941, when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. At the time, Hawaii wasn't even a state - it was merely a U.S. territory and had been since 1897 - but it was home to an American naval base, Pearl Harbor. It was also the closest United States target to Japan.

While much of the information disseminated has been in the form of press releases published in newspapers, the FBI eventually relented and released their records involving the Roswell crash. In 2011, more than 2,000 individual documents about this event were scanned and published as the digital project "The Vault," part of nearly 7,000 items on various subjects in the Freedom of Information Act's Library.

Nonetheless, skepticism about the official version of the incident prevails, and a countless number of people continue to believe the American government covered up a crash landing by aliens. As John B. Alexander, Ph. D., a former project manager at the Los Alamos National Laboratory and consultant to the CIA, put it, "Attempting to come to any complete resolution of the incident is a fool's errand, as whatever the truth may have been has become so distorted over time that facts have merged inextricably with fiction."

But fools did abound. The FBI, and anyone else who might have archived top secret memos, reports or even newspaper clippings, were barraged for years with Freedom of Information requests. When the FBI finally complied with thousands and thousands of

pages freely disseminated online, they were still accused of withholding or altering the facts.

Roswell & Area 51: The History and Mystery of the Two Most Famous UFO Conspiracy Sites in America looks at the places that have been an endless source of conspiracies for decades. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Roswell and Area 51 like never before.

Roswell & Area 51: The History and Mystery of the Two Most Famous UFO Conspiracy Sites in America
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Area 51

Chapter 1: The History of Area 51

Prior to 1865, the general area known as Area 51 was a lake in the heart of Emigrant Valley. Later, Area 51 went by a very general name, the Sheridan District.[2] Miners arrived in search of silver in the Sheridan District. Soon, the Sheridan District was renamed the Tempiute Mining District on January 28, 1869. Now referred to as tunnels on modern topographic maps, this treasure trove of warrens made the property even more valuable to the government. It was ready-made for underground testing of nuclear and atomic weapons.

Rachel was, at one time, referred to as Tempiute Village. At least one map exists, dated December 1, 1878, clearly showing what some claim is a less than accurate location of Tempiute.[3] Nevertheless, the name exists in the general area.

According to an annual report from the U.S. Army Signal Corps, there was a military post in Tempiute by 1879. Meteorological reports were received from the post monthly, submitted by local civilian Dr. John Stearns who was described as a voluntary observer. [4] Stearns was one of the seven trustees of the Wyandotte Silver Mining Company, obviously in search of silver.

Reportedly, there were various spellings of the name: Tempahute, Tem Pah-Ute, Tem Pahute, Tem Piute and Teimpahute. The nuances indicated a more precise meaning.

Timpahute referred to the mountain range. Tempiute was the highest summit within the range. Tem Piute referred to the mining district.[5] While it is unlikely that there are any photographs from the early years, Brushwork Diary includes several watercolor paintings created in 1879 depicting life in pre-Area 51.

Often Native American names somehow reflected their nature.

Tempiute, however you choose to spell it, was variously interpreted to mean “rocky butte” or “sick Indian [sic]” or the least flattering “gonorrhea.”

It could very well have been a term for defeat. By 1880, the miners were giving up and leaving. The area was desolate, remote and short on water. Area 51 is a 36 square mile lake in the heart of Emigrant Valley.[6] The moniker could be taken as a warning, long before the secrecy of Area 51. An emigrant is one who leaves a place, but Emigrant Valley was not a paradise for immigrants on the trail west. For as far as the eye could see, Emigrant Valley was a dry, arid, remote place. It was the ideal location for Area 51, but not so much for miners chasing a dream.

Tungsten was discovered in the area in the early 1900s and gave rise to some mining. But it was not until the Lincoln Mine Co. arrived in the 1940s that the area drew many residents. Even then, the mining was disappointing.

Once the military arrived at the air base, that changed. Under the guise of protecting cultural resources within the area, the U.S. Air Force withdrew thousands of acres of public land in the Groom Range, effectively removing it from “settlement, sale, location, or entry under the public land laws of the United States, including the mining laws but not the mineral and geothermal leasing laws.”[7] That effectively kept everyone out.

Most civilian homes in Rachel are mobile homes, and little Rachel Jones was born in one of them on February 15, 1978. On March 22, 1978, the locals renamed the town in her honor and continue to hold Rachel Day in her honor. Rachel Day was originally celebrated in April but even that has been changed. Rachel Day is now being held in May and remains the only civilian presence in the area for the few remaining residents.

Even, the Jones family no longer has any connection to Rachel. Little Rachel and her parents moved to Washington state when Rachel was a toddler. She died when she was only three years old, probably from volcanic dust spewed by the eruption of Mt. St. Helens.

In more recent times, the area encompassing far more than the few acres of Rachel is the Nevada Test and Training Range. The NTTR is "the largest contiguous air and ground space available for peacetime military operations in the free world."[8] Located at the site is Nellis Air Force Base, named in honor of Lieutenant William Harrell Nellis, a P-47 pilot trained by the Army Air Corps Flexible Gunnery School at what was formerly known as the Las Vegas Army Air Field. Nellis was killed in action December 27, 1944, during the Battle of the Bulge.

The village of Rachel still exists, just at the edge of Area 51. The Back Gate Road leads from Highway 375 outside of Rachel to the Area 51 Back Gate. For all the detail to names, it would seem that surely someone could have come up with a better name than the Back Gate Road. But that remains the name today.

A picture of the highway running along Rachel

The most commonly known marker for the entrance to Area 51 is the Black Mailbox. For years there was, as its name implies, a black mailbox at the entrance to Mailbox Road. Along with everything else that has changed over the years, the black mailbox is actually now painted white. But the road is still Mailbox Road.

The mailbox has no actual military significance. A local rancher who once leased the desert put up a mailbox in such a desolate location because there was no other landmark. Of course, silly legends abound that the mailbox is a secret communication system with outer space. So, the residential U.S. Postal Service mailbox came to serve as the landmark.

Beyond that, the mystery begins. An array of code numbers litter maps, when maps are even available. The Department of Defense labels their areas with codes that include the letter “N.” The Federal Aviation Administration uses four-digit numbers all beginning with

the three numbers “480.” As Yenne notes, when it comes to maps of the NTTR, “All data is subject to change.”[9] From that point on, it’s all alphabetic soup.

Area 51 is actually one of more than three dozen “areas” bearing the inglorious name of Area…whatever. As the U.S. government has taken over land in the Nevada desert to test military equipment, including nuclear bombs, they very pragmatically began labeling the parcels of land, beginning with Area 1, in the Yucca Flat area. Area 2 was a bit north of Area 1, but not adjacent. Area 3 butts up against the east side of Area 1. Area 4 is a rectangle that fits neatly between Area 1 and Area 2. It’s kind of a jigsaw puzzle but Yenne published a brilliant map showing the different areas.

To the far northeast is Area 15. While Yenne’s map doesn’t show it, Area 51 is just to the east of Area 15. Two reasons have been given for this. One is that “15” is “51” transposed. Anyone who loves numbers would respect the harmony of that.

The second reason was far more practical. It was speculated that the military would never have use for more than 50 areas of land, for testing. So far, there appear to be at least 30 acknowledged areas.[10]

No doubt, entire books could be written about each of the areas. Even Jacobsen’s Area 51 couldn’t resist wandering into areas, devoting entire chapters to Area 13 which is in no way related to Area 51 or activities that have taken place there.[11] Area 13 is devoted to nuclear testing, not testing aircraft like Area 51 is, and vice versa.

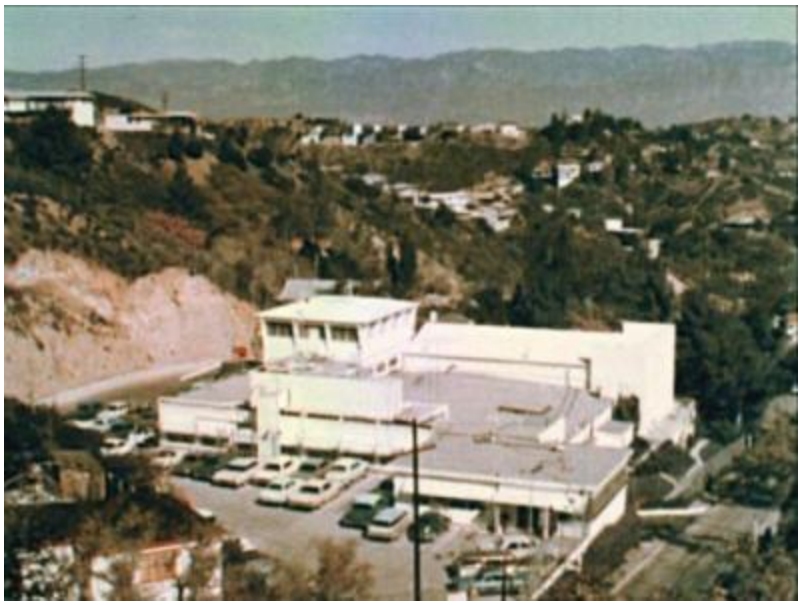
To some writers, life must have been boring at Area 51. The lack of a television signal is often cited as an example of just how badly the ranchers at Area 51 were roughing it. It is all too easy to forget

the history of television. Meet the Press is probably the only program from that era that most people would even recognize by name, aside from Howdy Doody. Color TV was years away, even for the most sophisticated workers at Area 51.

It is probably a bigger issue in retrospect than it was in 1947. Keep in mind that these residents were living on the cutting edge. They were flying and repairing aircraft that officially did not even exist. And, they were often flown home on weekends, to spend Saturday and Sunday barbecuing in the backyard with their wives and children. Paradise may have been a misnomer, but boredom was not the biggest issue these elite residents of Area 51 were addressing.

Their families no doubt suffered more than they did. Their wives and children, their parents, their friends, back on the home front were not allowed to know where they were or what they were doing. No one knew how dangerous life was for them. The rattle snakes and silence were the least of their worries. They were there to test experimental aircraft and some did die, crashing prototypes.

Classified motion pictures recorded much of the history, even if the films were confidential. Lookout Mountain Laboratory revved up their own movie studio, complete with offices in Burbank. It filmed radioactive testing from 1947 to 1969, capturing such things as a 3.3-kiloton explosion of an air-dropped weapon on March 29 1955.



Lookout Mountain Air Force Station

It did not happen at Area 51. It happened at Area 7, and caused quite a mushroom cloud. In its heyday, the mushroom clouds from most of the Areas were visible from Las Vegas, to the point of being an everyday occurrence until the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963. Much of this footage has now been released.

Nuclear Detonation at Area 7

But, there are numerous photographs reportedly taken from within Area 51. Photos of the housing, the airstrip and the hangar are liberally sprinkled throughout many of the books written about Area 51 and published online. Even YouTube videos[12] have surfaced, some reportedly created specifically for workers heading out to assignments at Area 51 for the first time.

But, Area 51 is the one most people seem to have heard of. There were no mushroom clouds from Area 51 yet, because whatever was happening there was not public knowledge nor visible by anyone without special clearance; the name Area 51 carries a very special weight than other areas, such as Area 9 and Area 3 where

extensive nuclear tests were conducted. The underground tests there continued until 1992. Still, it's Area 51 that everyone wants to know about.

Chapter 2: The Name of Area 51

Names abound, when it comes to this mysterious location. Given the myriad of names used interchangeably, researching Area 51 without a lexicon can be a challenge.

Area 51 is actually a part of Edwards Air Force base located within the Nevada Test and Training Range. The area is alternatively known as the Nellis Range Complex. The range is more formally and officially referred to as Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.

A map of the area

Obviously, Area 51 is a less of a mouthful. Unfortunately, it is not a very beautiful name. Over the years, Area 51 has been nicknamed Dreamland, Paradise Ranch, Home Base, the Box and Watertown. Home Base no doubt refers to the actual name of the

airport, which is Home Airport bearing call-letters ICAO:KXTA.

The little bit of desert that has spawned so much speculation, seems incapable of inspiring any kind of appropriate name. It had a pre-World War II name. It was originally known as Groom Lake which, in keeping with the tradition of perceived trickery and deceit, is essentially a dry lake. In fact, it is known as a salt flat, or a salt pan. When rain does fall from the sky, it does not soak into the ground. Instead, it evaporates and leaves behind salt and other minerals on the surface of the ground.

Salt flats are uniquely dangerous. While they leave behind salty crusts, there can be muddy quagmires hidden below that are capable of swallowing up a military truck. Quartzite at the Groom Range could be as deep as 220 feet,[13] well below layers of mud that remained liquid ingredients which could form precious stone or metal. Of course, these dry-sounding reports carry some intriguing and bone-chilling tidbits noted in a report that was prepared on behalf of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission.[14]

On the other hand, salt flats and their underground treasure are home to unexpected hidden reserves. More than half the world's lithium formed in the world's largest salt flat, the Salar de Uyuni, Bolivia. Likewise, there is treasure buried below the salt flats at Groom Lake.

The name Groom Lake was given to the flats and the surrounding mountain range by a British mining company incorporated as the Groom Nevada Lead Mines Company and as the Groom Southend Mining Company who, at best, mined some low grade silver and lead from this site. But, there has always been more than just salt at Area 51.

Groom Lake, Photo Courtesy of Doc Searls

A survey of the flats adds even more memorable names to the mix, explaining that the Groom Range is bounded on the south and west by the Emigrant Valley, the Jumbled Hills on the southeast and Coyote Pass on the northwest.[15] The survey was forthright about the survey being conducted "by the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology through Desert Research Institute…for preparation of the EIS for the Air Force." But, other agencies have become involved throughout the history of this location.

Dreamland is a particularly enchanting name to give to a dry lake, and one that has lent itself to more than one book title. The name actually harkens back to the poem "Dreamland"[16] by Edgar Allen Poe, who died a century before the U.S. military became associated with Area 51. Dreamland became a radio call sign for the base at Area 51. Previously, it had been Yuletide. The origin of that name appears have been lost to the ravages of time.

The name Paradise Ranch was allegedly given to Area 51 by

Clarence “Kelly” Johnson, an aeronautical engineer from Lockheed. Many have speculated why Johnson called it “Paradise Ranch.” There are enough rumors and speculations about Area 51, to warrant bypassing them. Johnson claimed it was to convince workers to leave the hubbub of the city and go to work in this exotic place, known as Paradise Ranch.

Eventually, the truth came out when pilots, engineers and support staff arrived, sometimes with golf clubs in hand. There was nothing resembling a paradise at Paradise Ranch. Eventually, it was shortened to just “The Ranch” and many workers referred to themselves as “ranch hands.”

The square-ish section of the Nevada map that is Area 51 is also known as “The Box.” According to at least one source, even the pilots from Nellis Air Force Base are forbidden to cross over into the airspace above The Box. If the source is to be believed, even top notch fighter pilots who dare to do so, or who plea the ignorance or innocence of their actions, are interrogated and grounded (implying that they are reprimanded or demoted) if they cross over into Box airspace.[17]

Area 51 has also gone by the name Watertown. Most people think of a Washington, D.C. airport when they hear the name Dulles. The airport was named for former CIA Director Allen Dulles, born in Watertown, NY—thus Area 51 was sometimes called Watertown.

Others claim that Watertown referred to those rare instances when the skies would open wide and, for even the briefest of time, rainwater would flood the dry lakebed, running off the surrounding mountains.

Project managers would then refer to the runway at Groom Lake

as Watertown Strip. Among photos by officers stationed there, are photos of the flooded lakebed proving that such events happened.

Alumni of Area 51 proudly and publicly wear the name Roadrunner. Anyone who was involved with a project called the Oxcart Program at Area 51 became a member of Roadrunners Internationale, whether they were feet on the ground or flying cutting edge planes that defied imagination.

The Roadrunner name originated in 1961. When Sergeant O. B. Harnage's office was being refurbished at Area 51, he and another officer, Sgt. Billy Prior, were experimenting with a new radio transceiver. Colonels Holbry and Nelson had just installed radios in their cars and called over the airwaves for a radio check.

Harnage and Pryor were military. They knew that it was against protocol to go on air without a call sign, sort of like a username on the internet. Harnage suggested they call themselves Roadrunner One and Roadrunner Two. There wasn't much else out there in the desert besides Harnage and Pryor and some roadrunners.

The name stuck. Future call signs followed the sequence. "Eventually, our call signs evolved into anyone in the Oxcart program at Groom Lake becoming 'Roadrunners,'" according to Harnage.[18]

The military likes names and codes, and Area 51 seemed to generate an endless list of them. For those who wonder whether Area 51 is a myth, there are documents like the "DFOULS ROSTER," which refers to The Area (they leave off the "51").

The roster is apparently one of several, this one being an acronym: "Damn Few Of Us Left Society." The damn few were those officers who were stationed at Area 51 between December 1962 and May 1968, who were still living. DFOULS was composed

of “those few, remaining, loyal, trustworthy, hardworking, etc. etc. USAF officers at The Area, who will continue to fearlessly Do Their Best for the Duration.”

The roster lists each officer’s name, phone number, name of their wife, and when they arrived at The Area. The DFOULS roster refers to a WIVES ROSTER “which should be kept (for possible historical value!).” Such items provide evidence of who was at Area 51 and when.

Those Roadrunners were former or retired CIA and Air Force personnel, in addition to contractors involved in testing the A-11/A-12 spy plane. During that era, the site was referred to as Groom Lake, Area 51 or The Ranch. The program was called the OXCART program. The U.S. government declassified the entire project in 1991.[19]

Perhaps the clothing worn by the Roadrunners lent some credence to the mythical nature of what was going on in Area 51. The alien myths imply, or even describe in detail, the uniforms worn by visitors from outer space.

In contrast, when Dr. Jerry Rogers, DPA, was involved with Oxcart from 1962 to 1964, he always wore civilian clothes. It has no doubt become imbedded in people’s minds that government officials wear identifying clothing. We identify a police officer because they wear uniforms. But, now, there were high-ranking government officers wandering around in polo shirts with exotic secrets in their heads. As that image became common knowledge, it no doubt seemed more terrifying. We could no longer identify the enemy, or our protector, by the clothes they wore.

Civilian listeners using scanners to monitor military radio frequencies have learned that the flights shuttling workers to the

base identify themselves by the call name Janet. While there may have been a time when Janet was a clandestine fleet, Janet operates with far more transparency today. In fact, the Janet flights in and out of a private terminal at the Las Vegas airport are publicly announced and even published online.[20] The flights include those in and out of Groom Lake, which generally everyone now knows is Area 51.

The flight operations are conducted by a government defense contractor, AECOM.[21] Only in existence since 1990, AECOM and the Janet flights are an indication that there is still plenty of activity, requiring human resources, at Area 51.[22] In other words, Area 51 is a moneymaker. AECOM stock is public traded on the New York Stock Exchange.

Early on, the word "black" became synonymous with Area 51 and top secret operations by governments, including the American government. It began with the Black Mailbox, which is used by UFO enthusiasts and other to pinpoint the best place to see the black ops in action. Or whatever is happening just over yonder.

Even though the Black Mailbox is now just the Mailbox, the word "black" continues. When the movie Men In Black[23] was released, the American audience knew the film would have something to do with secrets, probably governmental secrets and undoubtedly even outer space. They were not disappointed.

Even the military refer to their clandestine operations as black aircraft or black programs. The term "black" is not used in a mythical sense. It is literal, in at least some cases. But ferreting out the story of the color is a lot like peeking behind the curtain in The Wizard of Oz.[24] Behind the curtain, is just a man.

Bill Yenne, author of biography and historical nonfiction,

including many books on military and aviation history probably says it best, after his numerous accounts: “Area 51 is a black world of black airplanes that officially does not exist, and it is also a fantasy world of extraterrestrial visitation that almost certainly does not exist. It is the home of secret projects that did not exist—until we were told that they did exist. It is probably the home of secret projects that did exist, but about which we will never know.”[25]

Yenne has written an entire book about the black jets of Area 51. The SR-71 aircraft is known as the Blackbird. Literally, the Blackbird was painted black.

That was not the first choice nor did it have anything to do with secrecy. It helped reduce the heat generated by high-speed flight. Certainly, it looked cool. But, there was nothing sophisticated about the choice of color. It was not selected for its intimidating appearance. It just kept the plane from overheating.

The color implies intimidation. The novel, and the movie, Black Hawk Down[26] would surely not have been fully as powerful as a story had it been called Yellow Hawk Down.

If it wasn’t black, then it was “dark.” The darkness of the Cold War generated the mystique of a spy on every corner. Today there exists an entire website dedicated to Dark Government.[27]

Chapter 3: Roughing It

The early history of the "ranchers" in "Paradise" was far from glamorous. Those officers were not necessarily outdoorsmen. They were engineers and mechanics. At best, the pilots' idea of outdoors was high above the ground.

But early "ranchers" at Area 51 were issued work boots to defend against the rattlesnakes. The location was so remote that, as soon as the sun set, everything turned pitch black. There was no ambient light from a highway or streetlights. All the workers saw at night were stars in the vast expanse above Emigrant Valley. To address the issue, the workers were issued hats with lights.[28]

They lived in tents and not the fun kind. They were canvas tents pitched atop wooden platforms and lovingly called "hooches." In spite of the arid environment, frequent desert storms would roll through, ripping away the canvas and filling the usually-empty lake with up to an inch of water in no time.

One cook served up grub in the makeshift mess hall. Those brief thunderstorms were as close to a shower as anyone got on a regular basis. It took a month before showers were built.

Less than three dozen initial military residents set up camp. They were provided security by a handful of CIA officers. Perhaps the biggest thing to fear in those early days was the unexpected mourning howl of a coyote in the dark desert, someplace out of sight.

Initially, all the workers did was fly all day, and not too far at that. They were restricted to a 100-mile radius. If anyone crashed one of these newfangled, top-secret planes, the CIA's job was to keep it quiet. That was easier to do if they stayed in the heart of Groom Lake.

Eventually, housing improved. Quonset huts appeared and water wells were dug. In spite of its dry lakebed, Groom Lake sits above an aquifer. The water is there. It is just covered with the salt flat.

Eventually, there were house trailers, boiling in the hot sun. Three workers lived in each house trailer.

No one was allowed to call home. No one was allowed to write home. The only visitors were the occasional wild horse. They were, in essence, off the grid.

Quickly, the population grew. Soon there were 200 men on base from the CIA, the Air Force and from Lockheed Martin, the airplane manufacturer.

The identities of the pilots were pseudonyms. Area 51 pilots don't even know who they are flying with. Reportedly, there are meticulous government records of who is who. But, the pilots only know each other by fake names.

Early on, flying was not as simple as hopping into the cockpit and taking off. Because of the type of testing they were conducting, it took two flight surgeons to get a pilot into his partial-pressure suit.

They didn't use what one might consider a spacesuit. But, unaccustomed to the heights they would reach, the pilots spent a couple of hours breathing pure oxygen before climbing into the cockpit. The goal was to reduce the risk of altitude sickness.

Those suits were a pilot's lifeline. Fitted in a brassiere factory initially, the pilots were required to maintain exactly the same body weight, within ounces. If the suit didn't fit, the pilot could die from lack of oxygen and a plane could be lost. And, refitting was not an option. The suits were expensive, custom-made to fit one, and only one pilot.

Pilots were given unique tests like the “corpse test” where they were placed in a small space with their arms folded across their chest. It was impossible to move, as though they were a corpse in a casket.

There were numerous tests of each pilot’s vital signs. Some medical tests involved heat endurance. A pilot’s blood would boil at 63,000. They were aiming to go higher. The flyboys at Area 51 were going to do more than fly. They were going to fly beyond what anyone had ever dreamed.

An unflattering, but apparently true, part of the testing is known as Project Paperclip. The Project Paperclip doctors conducting tests reportedly had controversial professional histories. In 1980, it was revealed that some of these doctors had, indeed, been previously employed at Nazi concentration camps. “There they had obtained aviation medicine data by conducting barbaric experiments on…people considered disposable.” [29]

Scientists in Project Paperclip, Photographed at Fort Bliss, Texas.

As Jacobsen notes, numerous questions have arisen as to how

the government located the doctors who provided their services during Operation Paperclip. How did they know what to test for and how to conduct aerospace tests? Were they inventing as they went along? Of all the secret history that has been revealed about Area 51, the U.S. federal government has never de-classified Operation Paperclip.

But, after successfully passing whatever tests they were subjected to and by whom, history began for the pilots from day one. Someone bragged about being the first to fly 65,000 feet. Someone else was the first to reach that height-for a sustained amount of time, perhaps the same day. Later the same day, someone else might break that same record. One pilot claimed he was flying so high that, from the airspace above Area 51, he could see the Pacific Ocean. It was 300 miles away.

It was not just the pilots who were setting records. When an experimental plane's engine stalled in mid-air, "no mechanic in the world had any experience solving a combustion problem on an engine that had quit unexpectedly at sixty-four thousand feet."[30]

Chapter 4: Chronology

Were there not a branch of the United States military devoted to the skies, there would be no Area 51. But, in 1935, the United States General Headquarters Air Force came into being, with oversight for all Air Corps' combat elements. Prior to that, the Army oversaw all air activity. In 1940, fear set in. Following the Nazi conquest of France, Life magazine concurred that the blitzkrieg spawned a "chilling fear that the national existence of the United States might soon be threatened."[31]

Initially, an arid salt flat until some British miners took a chance that there might be precious metals buried below, Area 51 eventually became part of Edwards Air Force Base.

But it began as Las Vegas Army Air Field in 1941, prior to World War II. Area 51 offered a large expanse of flat land and clear flying weather, ideal for learning to fly weaponized aircraft. The weather was virtually always sunny. Even if a pilot had a rough landing, at least nothing more than tumbleweeds were in their way. The same was true if they failed to shoot their mark.

Graduates quickly became teachers. During the first six months or so, more than 100 instructors graduated from the new airbase, having earned their wings at Area 51.[32] A mind-boggling 320 students were entering flight school every week. For all the insistence that Area 51 didn't exist, it seems that the 10,562 students who enrolled in 1942 could surely verify that it existed and that they were there.

The training facility added gunnery school the following year and, in 1944, the base added training for B-17 co-pilots.[33] Plane models reflected their purpose and the B-17 was a Bombardment weapon.

As a plane's development evolved, another code letter was assigned to the end of the plane's designation, such as a B-17D. The first B-17 was flown as early as 1935 and was among the first planes flown into combat in World War II but, in 1939, the U.S. Air Corps only had 23 of these bombers, including three experimental B-17A's.

Even then, the B-17 could only reach a speed of 268 miles per hour, compared to the 300 mph of the P-36, and could only manage a combat range of 1,000 miles. Without someplace to develop and test planes, it would not have been possible to improve the American air power. Area 51 served as that place.

The bomber, later nicknamed the Flying Fortress, was to be the future of war. In 1939, the government ordered 53 of Boeing's B-17's and continued adding to their arsenal. By 1941, they added 144 more, before Pearl Harbor. But the military needed someplace to test these fast-moving machines. They also needed the privacy of a place where they could test them safely: safely without harming civilians, and safely from observation by the enemy.

A B-17B

The lease for the Nevada desert that became known as Area-51 was signed on January 25, 1941. Troops and staff arrived on June 17, 1941. Training for aerial gunners was to begin on December 9, 1941—scheduled to begin two days after Pearl Harbor caught the world by surprise.

Japan was a long distance away and now the U.S. was at war. Japan attacked Hawaii because it was closer than having to fly all the way to the mainland, among other things. The need for speed was obvious.

After war broke out, the U.S. AAF purchased 12,692 B-17's. Someone had to learn to fly these bombers and know how to handle the weaponry onboard. By 1945, the B-17F and B-17G were armed with twelve .50-caliber machine guns.

And then there were the bombs. Both these models could carry two 2,000-pound bombs—or they could load up with eight 1,600-pound bombs. Gunnery school was not for the lighthearted. Gunnery school was all about going to war and killing with machine guns and bombs, killing while doing the least amount of harm. But, at the time of Pearl Harbor, "no specialized school for flexible gunnery was in operation when the United States entered the war."[34]

Fortunately, at the Las Vegas Army Air Field, south of the Entertainment Capital of the World, construction was complete and soon it would become known as Area-51 where many of those gunners would learn their jobs with whatever equipment was on hand at the time.

In 1950, the first integrated casino/hotel opened in Vegas and called itself the Moulin Rouge. But, there would be no time for burlesque or slot machines for the flyboys at Area 51. Their country was depending on them.

In 1951, President Harry Truman initiated nuclear testing well beyond a few bottle rockets. According to one source, there were 105 nuclear weapons detonated aboveground with another 828 tested underground in chambers and shafts inside the Nevada Test and Training Range.

The land adjacent to Area 51 was the ideal place for such testing. It was a known fact that there were mines in the area and very few people. Reportedly, the testing ended on September 23, 1992, leaving the NTTR in possession of the largest amount of weapons-grade plutonium and uranium in the country, not secured inside a nuclear lab.[35] Area 51 is five miles away.

The goal of the U.S. was to find a way to fly high enough not to

get shot at by the Soviets while spying on what they were doing. And, what they were doing was nefarious. The U.S. had already dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Bikini Atoll a decade earlier. The U.S. knew what hell could fall from the sky. The government knew how to wreak havoc. They did not know how to prevent it from happening on American soil. Worse yet, the specter of the U.S. mainland being a target of a nuclear weapon seemed likely, if not evitable.

On August 12, 1953, the Soviet Union exploded its first hydrogen bomb. It was a 400-kiloton weapon. Little more than a week later, it detonated a 28-kiloton, boosted-fission plutonium bomb. They were just getting started. In October 1954, they conducted eight atmospheric nuclear tests. President Dwight Eisenhower feared that "nuclear Pearl Harbor" could be just over the horizon.

It wasn't just a hunch. The RAND Corporation conducted a study showing how devastating a Soviet attack could be. It could annihilate 85 percent of the U.S. Strategic Air Command bomber force. Immediately, the CIA began working on their "overhead reconnaissance project." It was not a military project. It was the CIA that started that first initiative.

By Christmas 1954, a dummy corporation was set up at the Groom Lake airfield, an ancient landing strip that was being brought up to snuff. The dummy corporation was CLJ, the initials of the head of operations, Kelly Johnson. Johnson and his hand-picked crew went to work to develop something—anything—that could protect the U.S. in this high-tech world.

Johnson and his team operated in secret, not in Area 51 but in Burbank. The name Burbank evokes memories of Johnny Carson and a world of comedy. Johnson and his crew borrowed from the

comics and called their project the “Skunk Works,” the name Al Capp’s cartoon character Li’l Abner distilled Kickapoo Joy Juice. While the description of Joy Juice seems to defy authorship, it is repeatedly referred to as a “moonshine elixir of such stupefying potency that the fumes alone have been known to melt the rivets off battleships.”

As with so many things military, there was a secondary reason. The name “Skunk Works” had no direct or sensible translation into Russian. The workers at the Skunk Works were convinced that Russian trawlers off the California coast housed KGB spies who monitored the Skunk Works, more formerly known as Lockheed’s Advanced Development Projects.[36]

These brilliant engineers deserved whatever light-hearted fun they could drum up. They were charged with protecting and defending the United States, perhaps even the world. Times could not have been more sober.

The test product, the U-2, was built in Burbank, but it was tested at Area 51 in July 1955. It was not until 1955 that the U-2 Project discovered that Groom Lake and the adjacent runway were not property of the Atomic Energy Commission’s Nevada Proving Ground. It was agreed and President Eisenhower approved it.

A picture of U-2 flight lines used at Area 51

HAVE FERRY, the second of two MiG-17F "Fresco"s loaned to the United States by Israel in 1969

Eventually there were seven specialized gunnery schools but Area-51 was one of the first. Initially, this very technical training was only open to volunteers. Later, only certain specialists were accepted. Along with learning gunnery, soldiers needed to learn to repair the planes inside and out and repair the radio equipment. The navigator and bombardier were given training—when facilities permitted. The idea of flying through the air with such dangerous weapons and hoping to hit the correct target without training seems ludicrous. On the other hand, no one expected Pearl Harbor. The military had to hit the ground running—or the air, flying. Even when training did happen, it took a mere six weeks.

The stigma of Area 51, as a mythical or frightening place, no doubt is the result of what apparently has actually happened there. Nearly everything that does happen at Area 51, or the remainder of the test site, is classified as top secret while it is ongoing. That should come as no surprise. Actually, much of what the military does is top secret regardless of where it is. But, Area 51 has become synonymous with secrets, as though something devious is happening and we don't get to know about it. Much of the time, the literature reads like schoolchildren pouting because a playmate told another playmate a secret—but they won't tell you.

The fact is that the government's experiments have been so controversial and unpredictable that, to carry them out publicly, would probably not have been wise. Even the scientists and military experts involved did not know what the results might be; that's what testing is all about.

Plus, the science is so advanced beyond the understanding of the typical high-school, or even college, educated citizen, that it is, if nothing else, a time-saver to test in secret and explain later. The average person struggles to operate their home computer so they

can chat and watch movies. Understanding how nuclear weapons are made, used, and managed is well beyond their abilities. They want the U.S. to be the strongest country in the world, but they don't want to admit they don't understand what is being done or why. There are experts who do understand and Area 51 is their playhouse.

In 1995, the magazine, "Popular Mechanics," splashed "Flying Saucers Are Real!" across its January cover. Inside, they rephrased the title slightly: "Flying Saucers: The Real Story: From the hopeless tangle of claims and counterclaims emerges the documented fact that secret military research has explored flying saucer flight."[37] Like most of the mind-numbingly vast amount of available information about Area 51, Science and Technology Editor Abe Dane's article is an undocumented firsthand account with no witnesses or recordable evidence. Not even a photo. There are some blurry photos that look more like movie sets. The only crisp photo is, ironically, of an unnamed photographer aiming either a camera lens or binoculars toward the camera.

It was not Dane's first coverage of Edwards Air Force Base. In January 1993, he had penned an article about a jet that could be launched from aboard an airplane already aloft.[38] It's not clear what inspired Dane to be suspicious of the government. Much of the Area 51 mystery had been an open book to Abe Dane. He had been invited to fly to Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, aboard a C-130 participating in a United Nation fleet fighting for what Dane called "a humanitarian cause that transcends national boundaries."[39] The same issue carried an article bearing the datelines Kirkland AFB, NM[40] and Camp Pendleton, CA[41] and Houston's NASA.[42] It is difficult to take the articles seriously, with articles about how to maintain the plumbing in your house and full-page advertisements for Chesterfield cigarettes, Abe Dane

did have civilian access like few others.

Like much of the literature about Area 51, the Roswell Crash of 1947 immediately raises its ugly head in Dane's article. The Crash, ironically, never even happened in Roswell and there is not even a circumstantial connection between the hysteria of 1947 and Area 51. But, never mind the facts. Enthusiasts' mantra seems to be, "Just prove that it did NOT happen." Dane not only chimed in. He led the chorus.

Chapter 5: The True Value of Area 51

Much of what has been written about Area 51 is truly fiction. It is as if the public hopes for a conspiracy—or at least little green men, women and children.

Fortunately, some of even the early employees are alive to set the record straight. The Las Vegas Review Journal interviewed several of those former workers about a book written by Annie Jacobsen. They had granted her interviews and opened doors for her, thinking she was going to finally write the definitive truthful account of Area 51. Instead, T. D. Barnes said, "They threw us under the bus just to make a story."[43]

The three gentlemen interviewed for the book, T.D. Barnes, Roger Andersen and Harry Martin, were reportedly former CIA contractors who worked at Area 51. Today, they are among the 360 members of Roadrunners Internationale, an association of former Area 51 workers. As Barnes said, so much of the pulp fiction that has come out of Jacobsen's book, along with many others, "There were too many well drillers, cooks, medics and support staff who would have had knowledge of such practices to make it a well-kept secret for 60 years," he said. Too many people would have had to conspire to keep secrets. Someone would have talked.

In spite of being the bane of existence for so many bright, talented, well-meaning and hard-serving military staff and contractors, there is a tremendous factual history. The contributions from Area 51 are so phenomenal that it begs the question why there is even a need for spinning up tales. Perhaps, they are just too phenomenal, too technical and too everyday for many to accept.

As far back as the Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War of

1870-71, military overseers had taken to the air to spy on their enemies. Initially, they used tall trees, church steeples and bell towers. To maneuver, they climbed into hot-air balloons. Eventually, military personnel stayed safely on the ground and sent just the camera up in balloons. As Gen. Werner von Fritsch, Commander in Chief of the German Army, predicted in 1938, "The nation with the best aerial reconnaissance facilities will win the next war."[44] It is unlikely that many people were aware that he said that. But, Americans (and others) behave as though they have been told this personally, constantly looking to the skies.

In the late 1940s the U.S. Air Force and Navy began trying to photograph the Soviet Union from on high. The Boeing RB-47 aircraft used cameras and other equipment to detect when the Soviets was tracking the U.S. flyers via radar. When a radar signal was weak and they were less likely to be caught, the RB-47 would dart inland and photograph any accessible targets. As is always the case, the U.S. military needed a name. They came up with another pseudo-acronym. They called these flights SENSINT missions - sensitive intelligence missions.[45]

In 1950, following the fall of the Iron Curtain, the Soviet Union began shooting down patrol aircraft flying above the Baltic Sea. By the time the Korean War began that year, the Soviet Union extended what it referred to as its "severe air defense policy" to the Far East. Any country whose planes came close were at the mercy of Soviet fighters.

The U-2 test program started during the summer of 1954. The CIA confirms that on August 1, 1955, there was an accidental test flight of the U-2 at Area 51. In the CIA's own words, "…test pilot, Tony LeVier, inadvertently became airborne at a remote test site in the desert of western Nevada called the Nevada Test and Training

Range at Groom Lake. You may know it as Area 51."[46]

The scene plays like one from the movie Back to the Future, LeVier insists he had not intended to fly. He was conducting taxi-tests which means that he was literally "driving" the airplane around on runways. The plane was so powerful that even LeVier discovered that he could not get the plane to land all that easily.

Part of the problem was Area 51. Chosen because of its vast flat lakebed, it was not possible to judge distance or height. The first attempt at going air-borne in a U-2 was successful. Landing was not. The plane bounced off the earth and back into the air. On the second try, the U-2 landed with little damage.

But damage, was done to the prototype. This early test proves the value of having such a remote place to test and land new planes.

At that time, the U-2 was a prototype. It was designed for testing to see if it was safe. A plane that would not land could be an issue.

It is easy to misinterpret why the space above Area 51 is off-limits. Even a test pilot like LeVier didn't expect liftoff and then he couldn't get it to land. Safety is important and not just to the pilot. The funding for these military operations is buried so deep in the financials that no one seems to really know how much it costs to develop, test and mass produce the amazing machines that first see light of day at Area 51.

Initially, high-altitude photography was used for photo mapping, kind of a precursor to Google Maps. The data was used to survey the layout for transcontinental highways along with mineral and oil exploration. Every county in the U.S. has photomaps of farm acreage. By 1955, the U.S. Department of Agriculture had its own Aerial Photography Field Office. Today, their online archive of maps, copyrighted by Microsoft Corporation, are available online

at the USDA website. While not too many details are included, the Nevada Test Site and the Groom Range are clearly marked on the USDA farm maps.[47]

A film produced for Area 51 employees and their families confirmed that Watertown, as they called it, had the highest-level of security of anyplace in the U.S. in 1960, even higher than the Manhattan Project.[48] The initial workers were sent to Area 51 to work on the U-2. The goal of the U-2 was to create a stealthy aircraft that could fly high and fast and collect the largest amount of recognizance in a single flight.

The U-2

The U-2 was the result of industry and government working together. Lockheed initiated a study to discover just how high a plane could fly. Following a feasibility study, Lockheed was given the go ahead on December 9, 1954. Kelly Johnson and a 26-men group took on the challenge of designing, building and flying a

plane in just 8 months time that would climb above 70,000 feet and travel for ten hours.

The purpose was high-altitude photography. But the challenge was making the plane do what they wanted it to do. Among other things, the pilot could turn the plane off and glide, with no engine-power, for 300 miles.

The key to the project was a light-weight plane. Numerous steps were taken to lighten the load. It was said that workers claimed they would trade their grandmother for ten pounds of empty weight. A "grandmother" became a term for ten pounds at an altitude of 70,000 feet. No wonder the U-2 was nicknamed the Angel.

Subcontracting on the project was impossible. Part of the plane was fabricated in Burbank, in pieces that were manufactured at night or on Sundays. The rest was manufactured in Bakersfield, CA. The work was hidden from day shift workers then the entire plane was broken down into pieces. The pieces were wrapped in canvas and sent to Area 51, without ever having been flown.

In fact, no fluids were added to the mechanical system until the pieces arrived in Area 51, where each plane was to be tested. Shell Oil developed a special fluid for the Angel that would not boil at low air pressure that was needed to keep the Angel's very unique engine running. As a side note, Rich & Janos say that the mixture was very similar in chemistry to a commonly-used insecticide and bug spray called Flit.[49]

The lighter fluid was so involatile that it would rarely burn even in a mishap. And, there were mishaps during testing.

To keep the plane lighter, the fuel tanks were stored inside the wings. The Angel's tail was connected by a mere three bolts.

In the end, the reconstructed Angel came to within a Grandmother of the original proposal. It was only ten pounds heavier than the goal.

It's no accident that the complete Angel can be disassembled quickly and ready for transport aboard a cargo plane including cameras, lab equipment, supplies, and ground support equipment. That's how it was designed, especially so that it could be delivered to the testing grounds at Area 51.

There were daily trips from Burbank to Paradise Ranch, as Area 51 was often called, especially when speaking to those who were being assigned to the mysterious new place in the desert. Some arrived with golf clubs, taking the name seriously.

Newcomers guessed their assignment at Paradise Ranch involved an atomic powered aircraft. It was not. There was a daily air shuttle from Burbank to Area 51 and just getting there could be fatal. One air shuttle crashed en route, in bad weather, with 14 workers aboard. Four pilots crashed while attempting to land an Angel at Area 51, and died. Then one Angel disintegrated in Arizona.

Yet, there were fewer mishaps than normal with the Angel itself. Trainees began by flying a T-33 or a T-Bird, to get the feel of this unlovely Paradise. Then they graduated to flying an Angel, with special weights, and attempting to land on the dry lakebed. Keep in mind that this is a plane that doesn't like to land. In fact, landing it involves turning the engine off and letting the plane stall.

After three successful landings, weights are removed and the pilot gets the feel of landing a very light plane that has no power. While many people consider that a challenge, the best pilots became adept at taxiing the Angel right up to hangar doors.

But that was just the beginning. Next, the pilots tested night flights and cross-country flights, higher and faster than ever before, with that dead engine landing.

The CIA says, "The sacrifice these pilots and U-2 project personnel made for their country helped the US win the Cold War. Along with thousands of Americans who worked at Area 51, their patriotism, ingenuity, and willingness to take on a project critics believed was impossible at the time – the creation of the U-2—allowed the US to penetrate the Iron Curtain and gain an unparalleled advantage over the Soviets in intelligence gathering."[50]

Meantime, personnel sought relief from the complicated and top-secret projects. Col. Slip Slater developed the "Basic Flying Rules at Groom Lake:"

1. Try to stay in the middle of the air.
2. Do not go near the edges of it.
3. The edges of the air can be recognized by the appearance of ground, buildings, sea, trees and interstellar space. It is much more difficult to fly there.

Barnes, Andersen and Martin were proud to have been a part of developing the Air Force's SR-71 Blackbird. The awesomeness of this feat is lost among the fairy tales. In 1983, that was confirmed by an unnamed SR-71 pilot who said with awe, that the Blackbird represented "high nineties technology that we were lucky to have in the sixties."[51]

In 1962, the U.S. Air Force and the CIA created Project OXCART, consisting of three models of airplanes. They ordered three interceptor variants to replace the F-108A Rapier, a fighter plane. The F-108 Rapier was a Mach 3 interceptor. It could fly

faster than the speed of sound. In other words, you didn't hear it coming.

The 2nd YF-12A interceptor prototype at Groom Lake

OXCART is often called Blackbird because the best known plane associated with it is the SR-71 Blackbird. In December 1962, the Air Force ordered this tricked-out version of the A-12. The Blackbird was about six feet longer and carried more optical and radar imagery systems and ELINT sensors (National Security Agency electronic intelligence signals) in interchangeable noses.

There were initially half a dozen Blackbirds. Then the Air Force ordered 25 more.

Next up, the new planes, the AF-12 and YF-12A, were intended to intercept supersonic bombers from the Soviet Union before they arrived in the U.S. with a lethal payload. Once detected, the U.S.

planes could deter the enemy with three air-to-air missiles. The firestorm could take place in the sky, far above the earth. Given that, the planes were given to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for research. That part of OXCART was codenamed KEDLOCK.[52] Kedlock (no caps) is another term for an invasive weed, a member of the mustard family.

The second part of the project was TAGBOARD. In October 1962, the CIA initiated a feasibility study for the A-12 to unmanned drones. Just for fun, the "mothership" was the M-21. This fast-flying reconnaissance Lockheed could reach a speed of over Mach 3.3 at 90,000 feet above the earth.

Today's hobbyists flying a drone in their backyard seem far removed from Area 51. But, in June 1963, the Air Force took over project TAGBOARD because the U.S. Air Force "had overall charge of unmanned reconnaissance aircraft."[53]

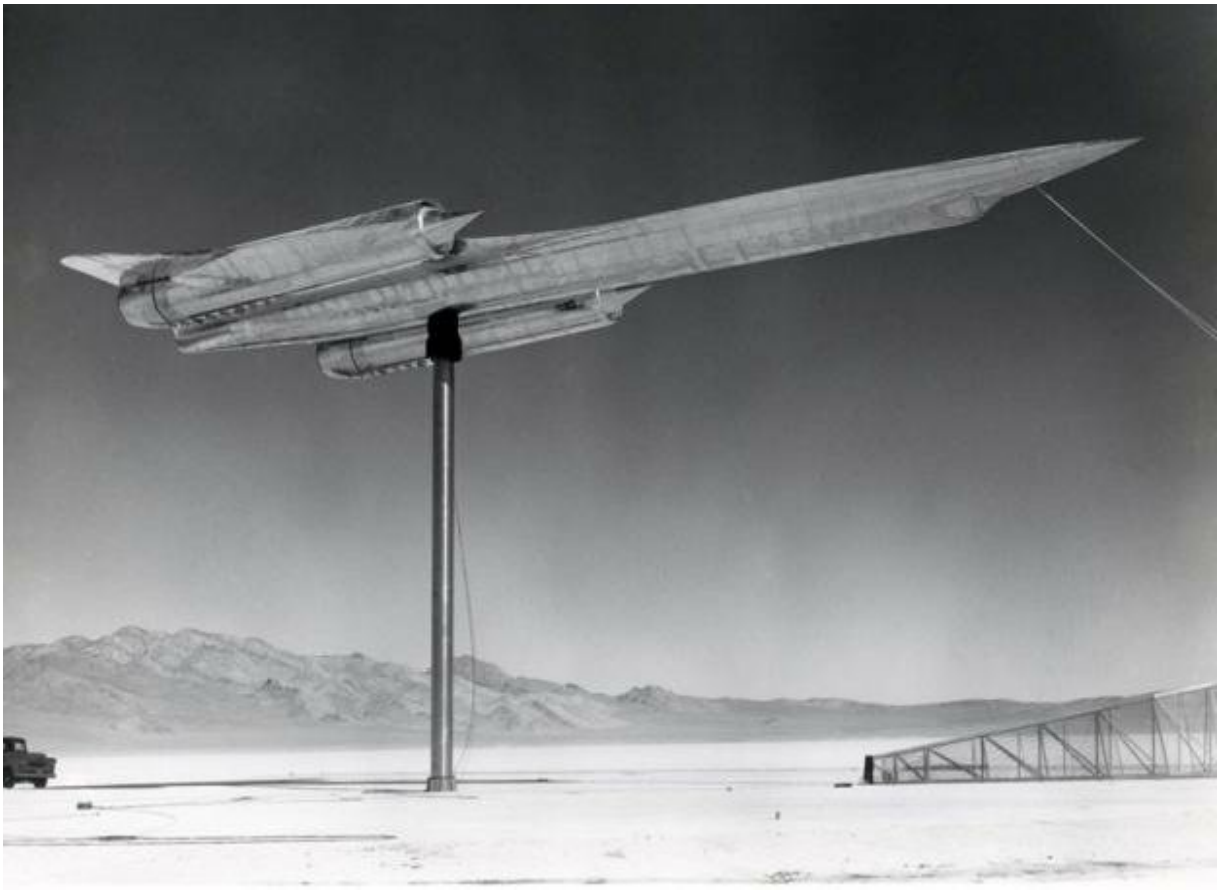
In mid-1964, President Johnson disclosed that the Blackbird existed, but he transposed the letter designation. The Air Force officials ignored the error and continued using Blackbirds as SR-71, instead of the original designation RS-71s. The blackbird then continued in operation until 1999—35 years later- when funding was vetoed. [54]

In May 1967, President Johnson authorized another ominous-sounding project, Operation Black Shield. Air battles high above Hanoi and Haiphong were annihilating the U.S. military. American pilots were being shot down nine times as often as the U.S. was shooting down the enemy.[55]

Worse yet, the U.S. did not know where the Communist missile sites were located. Thirty-seven U-2 missions and hundreds of drones were not successful in pinpointing precisely where they

were. To make matters even more untenable, there were rumors afloat that Russia was supplying the North Vietnamese with surface-to-surface missiles with sufficient range to fire on American troops in the south. Something had to be done.

The A-12's proved their worth. They flew from Groom Lake, NV, into battle at Okinawa. They flew at Mach 2, for most of the trip.[56]



An A-12 Mounted for Testing at Area 51

Operation Black Shield was instrumental in the Vietnam Conflict. They were shot at, but never hit. They were just too fast.[57]

These experimental drones could be launched from far away, fly their missions and be returned to a preprogrammed location safely designated within international waters. They could jettison a

payload that would self-destruct with a weather-activated explosive device. On the fourth test, there was a launch mishap and the mothership crashed, killing LCO Ray Torick. The TAGBOARD part of OXCART was cancelled, but the experiments were not a complete loss. The Air Force used their trusty B-52s to launch the TAGBOARD drones against Communist China. Of course, they needed a new name. Four missions of SENIOR BOWL were flown. None completed a successful flight and even SENIOR BOWL was cancelled in July 1971.

Speed has taken on a whole new meaning. The SR-71 went from Area 51 to higher than anyone, and for a longer period of time. No one knows if it could outrun an alien spaceship, the records it achieved are beyond imagination and the records are now aging without competition. On July 28, 1976, an SR-71 broke, and retains, a world record. No other plane has ever flown higher than the SR-71's record 85,069 feet—with sustained flight.

The records weren't even a rarity. The very same day, another SR-71 flew at a speed of 1,905.81 knots, equaling about Mach 3.3. Without further explanation, that's fast. That's superfast. Mach 1 is a speed faster than sound.

Yet, Brian Shul[58] claims that he flew in excess of Mach 3.5 on April 15, 1986. He was attempting to evade an attack by Libya. In fact, he was outrunning a Libyan missile.

The same model aircraft holds the record for flying "Speed Over a Recognized Course." It remarkably flew from New York to London in less than two hours. If that wasn't enough, the plane slowed down enough from its average Mach 2.72 in-flight speed long enough to refuel while high in the sky.

If the Concorde flight time comes to mind, it is only because it is

a commercial record and highly touted. But, the Concorde took an hour longer.

Even at the end of its career, the SR-71 was setting records. En route to its final destination at the Smithsonian Institution's Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, VA, the SR-71 set four more records on the way.

The SR-71B

As of 2014, it was declared that official top speed of the SR-71 still remained classified. Some people say that it was far beyond Mach 3.3.[59] But it was not speed that did in the Blackbird. It was the introduction of satellite technology. As Yenne says, “if there was anything blacker in the metaphorical sense than the CIA and

the black jets of Area 51, it was the NRO and its satellites."[60] The satellites were a poor substitute since they were filming from as much as 100 miles above. Blackbirds flew no more than 18 miles up in the sky.

Chapter 6: Beyond Area 51

Area 51 has always been merely a testing ground. While everything that happens there is top secret, at some point, it leaves and enters the world as full-fledged, good old American know-how.

Area 51 continues as part of our economy. The primary employers at Area 51 are Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, United Technologies Corporation and URS Corporation. As investor, Joseph P. Porter,[61] says about the Area 51 employers: "Except for URS, these are large-cap corporations. They all pay dividends. They are all committed to growth. They are all major government contractors. And, as the title of this piece would imply, they are all companies that have some association with Area 51."

While much of the efforts at Area 51 have been, and continue to be, dedicated to military power, this mysterious place has contributed to everyday life. The first drones were tested at Area 51. They were large airships. Now you can buy one on Amazon, or even your neighborhood electronics store, and create your own recognizance. It seems everyone has one. These little toys that cost less than $100 seem so simple. Few people realize the little toy they use to photograph their favorite location or activity from above is actually Area 51 invading their home or business. Area 51 doesn't seem so terrifyingly intimidating when their technology comes home to roost on a shelf in your son or daughter's bedroom.

Among the latest projects is the RQ-3 DarkStar. This unmanned aircraft was the brainchild of Lockheed. It was invented as a High-Altitude Endurance plane back in 1993, a result of the High-Altitude Long Endurance program of the 1980s.

The RQ series gave rise to other models, whether they were

tested at Area 51 or not. They were related. It is common knowledge that drones have been part of the American arsenal overseas in Pakistan, and elsewhere. Numerous RQ-170 missions were flown in preparation for Operation Neptune Spear. On May 2, 2011, the result of the RQ-170 missions, an outgrowth of the testing of the RQ-3 at Area 51, Osama bin Laden was killed at his compound in Abbotabad, Pakistan.[62]

Along with all the "dark" projects, there was also a "white world" of planes. However, as Yenne maintains, the white planes never entered the skies above Area 51. The closest that any came was yet another member of the dark world: the DarkStar. It, too, was a creation of Skunk Works and has lead the way to continuing innovations. "Indeed, the DarkStar has evolved into programs that are known to have been seen over Area 51…."

Ufologists must have been mesmerized, as life began to resemble art. The DarkStar resembled a flying saucer from the front view. It was small. It was a mere 15 feet long. It was stealthy. Unfortunately, it had a tendency to crash. DarkStar reportedly had a very short shelf-life.

In 2003, another dark invention, Son of DarkStar, took its place and, ever at the ready with names, the military named it Polecat. A polecat is another name for a skunk and, since it came out of the efforts of Skunk Works, it was yet another effort at humor among a deadly serious game.

The Polecat was originally flown in 2005, but it was not officially introduced to the public until at least a year later, and then not in the United States. It was demonstrated at the Farnborough International Air Show in England, although it was not literally at the fair. It had a wingspan of 90 feet and a revolutionary new manufacturing system made it more cost efficient than most

planes. It was a magnificent concept, with the ability to carry a payload of up to half a ton of sensors. It was environmentally correct, being made of 98 percent composite materials.

It was practically magical. The engine intakes were designed to actually deflect the real enemy, radar-detection by the enemy. Tests even showed that it would be more five times more survivable and mission-effective. For one thing, unmanned planes eliminated the need to replace pilots every ten hours. The developer, Lockheed Martin, reportedly continued testing its newest gadget at Area 51.

But, it never made an in-person appearance. It was only seen—or noted seen—above Area 51's testing site. Then, on December 18, 2006, there was a Polecat crash that ended in total devastation. The Polecat was annihilated.

It was the only Polecat that ever existed. Only one. It was merely a prototype. Rumors abound that Lockheed Martin might delve into drones that could stay aloft for up to five years.[63]

Who knows what is being dreamed up at Skunk Works and tested at Area 51. Eventually, the secrets will likely be declassified and they, too, will become part of the history of Area 51.

Chapter 7: The Future of Area 51

There is more history at Area 51 than any one person will ever be privy to. But, history continues to be made.

The Roadrunners are an aging lot. Those who claim to have had clearance to officially be employed at Area 51 will soon be gone, taking their personal histories with them.

If nothing else, Area 51 provides endless fodder for speculation that often results in the printed, or digital, word. In this era, when anyone can get words printed, everyone joins the fray. Whether history is fact or supposition, the books continue to fill the shelves.

Fortunately, a smattering of those books are preserving the history of this unique place. The transparency of the internet is assisting with the bevy of websites publishing now de-classified information. Of course, there are other websites decrying them, claiming that the de-classified documents are themselves hoaxes.

Along the way, traditional media has attempted to report on Area 51. In April 1994, ABC's World News Tonight sent a crew to attempt to make sense out of whatever was happening out there in the desert.

Along with the development of sophisticated military equipment, far beyond our imagination, it has also developed a tourism industry. The nearest highway to Area 51 has been nicknamed the Extraterrestrial Highway.

Truth or dare, Area 51 continued to make cultural contributions. When Independence Day was filmed, in 1996, Roland Emmerich and Twentieth Century Fox wanted to be authentic about their fictional story. They wanted to film at Area 51. Reportedly, they nearly did. The U.S. government apparently agreed to allow film,

but only if the movie deleted the term “Area 51” from the script. Again, Area 51 made history and contributed to the conspiracy theory surrounding the site. Area 51 was perceived as becoming so powerful that merely saying “Area 51” was forbidden.

The pull is strong. In 1990, a Bostonian computer programmer with the familiar sounding name of Glenn Campbell abandoned his ones and zeroes and moved to Rachel. Not the country singer, this Glenn Campbell renamed himself PsychoSpy and established himself as the clearinghouse for all UFO and Area 51 innuendo, fact, rumor, sightings and tours.

He published what public information he could glean in a newsletter, The Groom Lake Desert Rat. But, even Campbell rewrote his own history. In 2001, Glenn Campbell took to heart the name Emigrant Valley, shut down his unofficial Area 51 Information Center and left Rachel, NV. The Desert Rat left town with him, but it settled online. It didn’t really matter where it was published, since Campbell never had military clearance or access to the Area he liked to watch from afar, binoculars in hand. Eventually, even the online version lost momentum and has been lost. But, in keeping with the oddness that is Area 51, PsychoSpy claimed to have “written, published, copyrighted and totally disavowed” The Groom Lake Desert Rat.[64] No doubt, there is future history just waiting down the road, or over the next ridge.

It seems there is always someone ready to fill the void. In 1989, Pat and Joe Travis turned the old Rachel Bar and Grill into the Little A’le’Inn. They flip alien burgers and pour alien beer. They sell UFO collectibles (not from real aliens) and military shoulder patches.

Yenne says that reportedly Google Earth fanatics has observed ongoing construction at Area 51. And, there are still workers at the

site. The Travises say that when anyone asks the workers what they do at Area 51, they routinely describe themselves as janitors. Yenne notes that the current contractor in charge is EG&G, a site management company.

Aside from the Travises, EG&G is the most public history-maker anyone will admit to. Edgerton, Germehausen and Grier was originally a technical consulting firm founded in 1931 by Dr. Harold Edgerton, a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His forte was pioneering the industry of high-speed photography. When the Manahatten Project conducted nuclear tests, EG&G provided the imaging technology.

EG&G moved beyond photography and filled a new niche created by this brave new world of high-tech war. They stepped in as facility managers at secure government locations. Area 51 is just one of those sites. In 2002, EG&G was absorbed by United Research Services. URS Corporation manages, among other things, NASA'S Kennedy Space Center.

The enigma of Area 51 is so strong that there are actually no fences around the area. There are just random warning signs. Trespassing is prohibited. Photography is prohibited. But, to some, that is just part of the culture. As Yenne asks, "How can photography of something that officially does not exist be prohibited?"

WARNING
U.S. Air Force Installation
WARNING!
PHOTOGRAPHY
OF THIS AREA
IS PROHIBITED
18 USC 795

AREA 51
TOP SECRET RESEARCH FACILITY
WARNING
Restricted Area
It is unlawful to enter this area without permission of the installation commander.
Sec. 21, Internal Security Act of 1950; 50 U.S.C. 797
While on this installation all personnel and the property under their control are subject to search and seizure.
Photography Prohibited
It is unlawful to make any photograph, film, map, sketch, picture, drawing, graphic representation of this area or equipment at or flying over this installation.
Sec. 21, Internal Security Act of 1950; 18 U.S.C. 795
Use of deadly force authorized

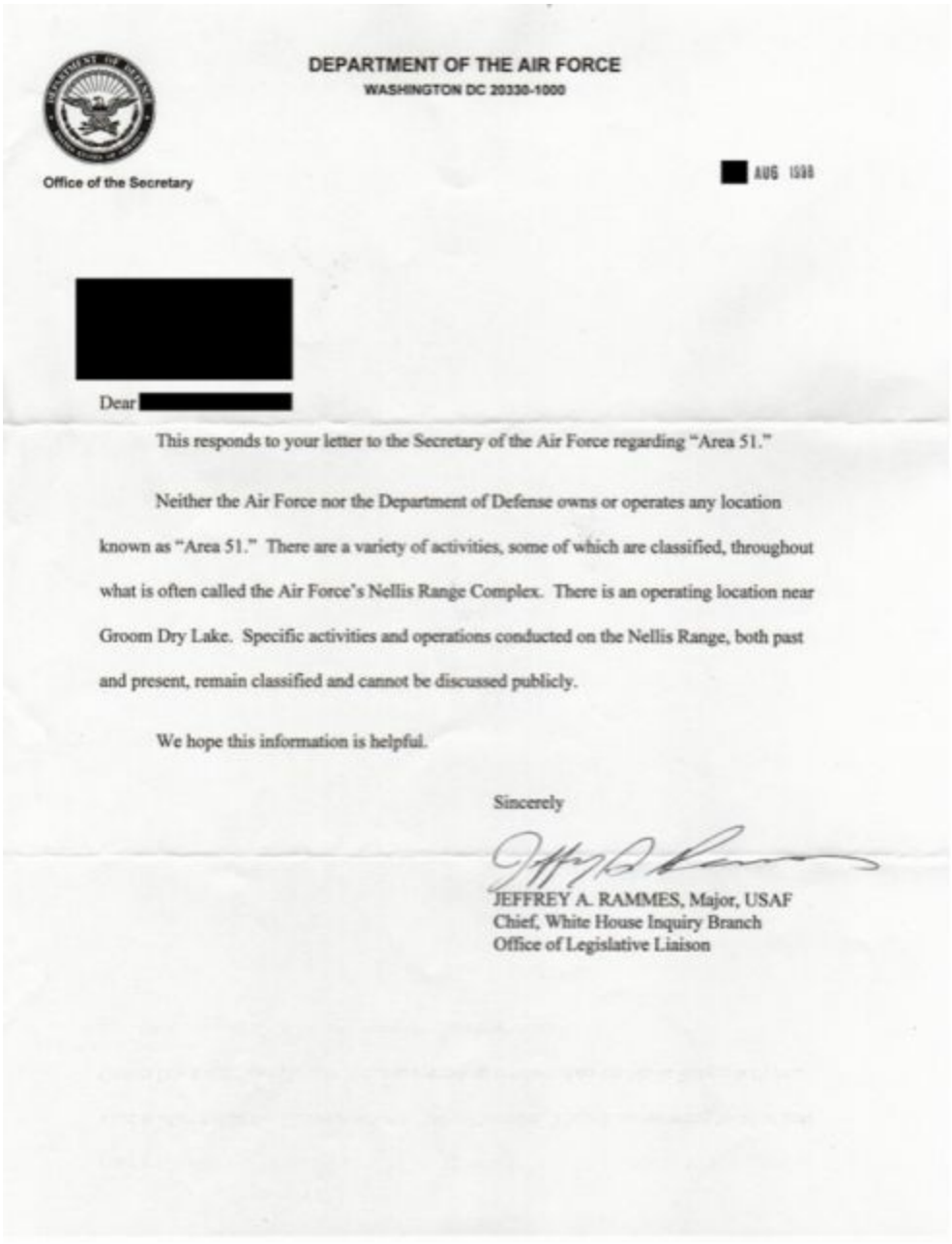
Pictures of warning signs

II. OXCART RECONNAISSANCE OPERATIONS PLAN

1. The required photographic coverage of North Vietnam will be accomplished by the OXCART vehicle operating from Kadena Air Base in Okinawa. This operating location at Kadena has been prepared for OXCART operation for some time.

2. Operational missions will be planned, directed and controlled by the Central Intelligence Agency Operations Center. Three OXCART aircraft and the necessary task force personnel will be deployed from Area 51 to Kadena.

3. With this inventory a minimum of nine (9) successful operational missions per month can be flown consistent with available weather. Overcast skies are a predominate feature associated with the monsoon season and limit the number of days suitable for effective photographic reconnaissance. As the monsoon season wanes, the number of clear days increases permitting more frequent, repetitive reconnaissance coverage. Missions will be launched on a twenty-four hour alert basis. This will permit maximum utilization of the favorable weather available. In addition to the operational missions flown, necessary test and proficiency sorties will be flown from Kadena. OXCART aircraft will be rotated [redacted] to maintain the required number of operationally ready aircraft at Kadena.



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC 20330-1000

Office of the Secretary

[redacted] AUG 1998

[redacted]

Dear [redacted]

This responds to your letter to the Secretary of the Air Force regarding "Area 51."

Neither the Air Force nor the Department of Defense owns or operates any location known as "Area 51." There are a variety of activities, some of which are classified, throughout what is often called the Air Force's Nellis Range Complex. There is an operating location near Groom Dry Lake. Specific activities and operations conducted on the Nellis Range, both past and present, remain classified and cannot be discussed publicly.

We hope this information is helpful.

Sincerely

JEFFREY A. RAMMES, Major, USAF
Chief, White House Inquiry Branch
Office of Legislative Liaison

Declassified federal government documents referencing Area 51

Roswell

Chapter 1: Flying Saucer on Ranch

"The modern preoccupation with what ultimately came to be called Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) actually began in June, 1947. Although some pro-UFO researchers argue that sightings of UFOs go back to Biblical times, most researchers will not dispute that anything in UFO history can compare with the phenomenon that began in 1947. What was later characterized as 'the UFO Wave of 1947' began with 16 alleged sightings that occurred between May 17 and July 12, 1947, (although some researchers claim there were as many as 800 sightings during that period). Interestingly, the 'Roswell Incident' was not considered one of these 1947 events until the 1978-1980 time frame. There is no dispute, however, that something happened near Roswell in July, 1947, since it was reported in a number of contemporary newspaper articles; the most famous of which were the July 8 and July 9 editions of the Roswell Daily Record. The July 8 edition reported 'RAAF Captures Flying Saucer On Ranch In Roswell Region,' while the next day's edition reported, 'Ramey Empties Roswell Saucer' and 'Harassed Rancher Who Located 'Saucer' Sorry He Told About It.'" - The Roswell Report: Fact vs. Fiction in the New Mexico Desert, a report made by the United States Air Force in 1995

In one of his lesser known works, The Floating City, science-fiction author Jules Verne wrote, "Put two ships in the open sea, without wind or tide, and, at last, they will come together. Throw two planets into space, and they will fall one on the other. Place two enemies in the midst of a crowd, and they will inevitably meet; it is a fatality, a question of time; that is all." In many ways, he captured the attitude of many people who, throughout the centuries, have considered the possibility of life on other planets. From the psalmist who asked God, "What is man that thou are

mindful of him?" to those who worshipped at Stonehenge to the astronomer of the Far East, there has always been something about life that forces people to wonder about other life beyond Earth. Likewise, each individual's answer to the question says more about them and the times in which they are living than it does about the actual possibility of extraterrestrial life.

Still, in many ways, concerns about life on other planets is primarily a phenomenon of the 20th century, for it was only then that Earthlings had sufficiently explored the reaches of their own planet to have time to be interested in the goings-on on other worlds. Consider what H.G. Wells wrote in his classic War of the Worlds: "No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinized and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinize the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. It is possible that the infusoria under the microscope do the same. No one gave a thought to the older worlds of space as sources of human danger, or thought of them only to dismiss the idea of life upon them as impossible or improbable. It is curious to recall some of the mental habits of those departed days. At most terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars, perhaps inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise. Yet across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us. And early in the twentieth century came the

great disillusionment”

Written in 1898, it enjoyed a widespread popularity that might not have been possible several decades earlier, and yet it was seen as clearly a work of fiction, nothing for anyone living in the largely peaceful years of the turn of the 20th century to be concerned about. And yet, when Orson Welles did his famous broadcast based on the book 40 years later, speaking over the radio to listeners fearing both poverty at home and war overseas, the broadcast caused such an uproar that one United Press story observed, “The Federal Communications Commission investigated a radio program today which caused thousands of persons in every part of the country to believe that the eastern United States had been invaded by creatures from the planet Mars in the first engagement of a ‘war of the worlds.’ The hysteria following the one hour radio dramatic program swamped police and newspapers of New York City and of New Jersey towns and cities where the Martian adventurers were said to have landed, killing thousands of persons after they left their space rocket. But it was not limited to the East. In Indianapolis, an unidentified woman ran down the main aisle of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, crying: ‘The world is coming to an end.’ The congregation was hastily dismissed. In Toledo, O., three persons fainted at telephones while trying to call police. In Chicago, police reported that several persons ran out of restaurants without finishing their meals. In Salt Lake City, residents packed their belongings and were only dissuaded from fleeing their homes by proof that it was all just entertainment. But in the east, in the country being subjected to the ‘invasion,’ hysteria ran riot. Several persons came forward to swear they saw the rocket land and ‘strange creatures’ climb out of it. In Newark, N. J., hundreds fled from two city blocks, carrying what possessions they could snatch up in their flight.”

Less than a decade later, “little green men” would again become the focus of a nervous nation. Post-World War II America was much like a boxer who had just completed a title match – the event was over, but the adrenaline was still pumping. Having defeated the Nazis and Japanese, Americans were sharply honed to be on the lookout for other enemies that might attack at any time. Of course, there were the Communists and people were certainly aware that anyone, anywhere could be a “red.” But Communists were something of a known quantity; the question in the backs of many people’s minds was, what about the unknown. And certainly nothing was as unknown as the beings who might come to Earth from other worlds.

It all started, or at least the events were set in motion, in late June 1947 when pilot Kenneth Arnold was flying near Mount Rainier in Washington State. He radioed the tower to report that he was seeing a group of objects flying in a V-formation like geese would and that they moved "like a saucer would if you skipped it across the water." Thus, Arnold became the first person to report seeing a “flying saucer.” The wire services soon picked up the story, and on June 25, the Associated Press reported, “Army and CAA spokesmen expressed skepticism today over a report of nine mysterious objects—big as airplanes—whizzing over western Washington at 1200 miles an hour. Kenneth Arnold, a flying Boise, Idaho, businessman who reported seeing them, clung, however, to his story of the shiny, flat objects, each as big as a DC-4 passenger plane, racing over Washington’s Cascade mountains with a peculiar weaving motion ‘like the tail of a kite.’ An army spokesman, in Washington, D. C., commented, ‘as far as we know, nothing flies that fast except a V-2 rocket, which travels at about 3500 miles an hour—and that's, too fast to be seen.’ The spokesman added that the V-2 rockets would not resemble the

objects reported by Arnold, and that no high-speed experimental tests were being made in the area where Arnold said the objects were. Arnold described the objects as 'flat like a pie-pan,' and so shiny that they reflected the sun like a mirror. By his plane's clock he timed them at 1:42 minutes for the 47 miles from Mt. Rainier to Mt. Adams, Arnold said, adding that he later figured by triangulation that their speed was 1200 miles an hour. 'I could be wrong by 200 or 300 miles an hour,' he admitted, 'but I know I never saw anything so fast.'"

It was as though Arnold's story opened the floodgates of alien invasion, because another AP article appeared out of Kansas City on the 26th and reported that carpenter W. I. Davenport had seen "nine shiny objects flying at a high rate of speed, such as, described by a Boise, Idaho, pilot." The article quoted him as saying, "There were nine of them, flying in a group, with one a little to one side. They were flying so fast I barely had time to count them before they were gone. They were leaving vapor trails." Unlike Arnold, however, Davenport could not describe the shapes of the aircraft he saw.

Around this time, everyone seemed to be seeing saucers. The Albuquerque Journal reported that a member of the Navajo tribe, who worked at the reservation's trading post, saw a disc on June 25, 1947. Another man reportedly saw a disc that day in the same area. It seemed there were saucers everywhere, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Michigan[4] and Iowa, as well as Mexico and Canada..

The front page of the Journal included a story about flying saucers every day for days prior to the Roswell event. Perhaps it

was not so surprising that a certain Mr. and Mrs. Dan Wilmot, sitting on their front porch in Roswell shortly before 10 p.m. on July 2, 1947, saw “two inverted saucers faced mouth to mouth.”[65] They reportedly had their sighting experience the same day as the Albuquerque paper ran other saucer stories. The Wilmot’s claimed the saucers were flying towards Corona, NM.

Chapter 2: Mogul Balloons

"Mogul was designed to run balloons at very high altitudes with extremely sensitive acoustic sensors what we were looking for were nuclear test on the part of the Russians, because we a constant altitude, we could see...because there were no satellite… they had a couple Mogul balloons and several of those are unaccounted for during that period of the. They are very large in the sense that some of them were up to 600 feet long, not one gigantic balloon, but a series of balloons, because as they went up to altitude some of them broke off and some of them dropped ballast and they were very sophisticated. They had a lot of tin foil on them and a lot of different things. Mogul is a possibility. We found a couple of researchers in New Mexico that we are in contact with now because they kept the records in some regards. But, of course that was a Top Secret project at the time and we don't know if Blanchard knew about that or not: (we don't have any indication that he did). And that they used the weather balloon in an attempt to cover the other balloon which was a classified project." - The Roswell Report: Fact vs. Fiction in the New Mexico Desert, a report made by the United States Air Force in 1995

Magicians and illusionist maintain that people tend to see what they expect to see, and so it was in 1947 as more and reports of UFOs came in from around the world. It was in this context that a small Air Force accident blossomed into one of the most important non-events in American history. To be fair, few in the country knew the United States Air Force was regularly testing items and aircraft that would indeed be unidentifiable to the average American.

One of these series of tests taking place in 1947 was code named Project Mogul. According to the Air Force report on the program,

“Project MOGUL resulted from two important post-World War II priorities set by the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, Henry H. “Hap” Arnold. These were to continue the cooperative wartime relationship between civilian research institutions and the military, and to maintain America’s technological superiority, especially with respect to guarding against a bolt from the blue-in other words, a devastating surprise attack. MOGUL addressed both of these concerns. Developed partly under contract with leading scientific institutions-such as New York University (NYU), Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Columbia University, and the University of California at Los Angeles MOGUL’S objective was to develop a long-range system capable of detecting Soviet nuclear detonations and ballistic missile launches. Army Air Forces officials assembled an expert group of military and civilian scientists to carry out the project. … Determining whether the Soviets were testing nuclear devices was of the highest national priority; it demanded the utmost secrecy if the information gained was to be useful. …MOGUL was conducted under stringent security-secluded laboratories, code words, maximum security clearances, and strictest enforcement of need-to-know rules.”

Thus, the Air Force had a large scale, top secret project going on during a time when there was a great deal of concern that extraterrestrial life might be preparing to invade the world. What could possibly go wrong? A great deal, according to the Air Force: “Nevertheless, while the nature of the project remained shrouded in secrecy, some of its operations obviously could not. The deployment of giant trains of balloons-over thirty research balloons and experimental sensors strung together and stretching more than 600 feet-could be neither disguised nor hidden from the public. Moreover, operational necessity required that these balloons be launched during daylight hours. It was therefore not

surprising that these balloons were often mistaken for UFOs. In fact, MOGUL recovery crews often listened to broadcasts of UFO reports to assist them in their tracking operations. Additionally, the balloons were unsteerable, leading to such amusing events as the one reported by the New York Times in which a secret MOGUL balloon 'floated blithely over the rooftops of Flatbush…causing general public excitement…before it came to rest on top of a [Brooklyn] tavern.' In another episode, MOGUL balloon recovery technicians directed a B-17 bomber, which was tracking one of the tests, to buzz and scare off a curious oil rig crew that was about to 'capture' a balloon train that had fallen near Roswell. The ruse worked. However, too much activity was going on for the project to remain completely hidden. A MOGUL project officer later noted, 'It was like having an elephant in your backyard…and hoping no one would notice.' These occurrences were typical, leading the recovery crews to describe themselves as Balloonatics, due to the predicaments in which the wandering balloons sometimes placed them, but the information the balloons were attempting to obtain was vital."

A National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather balloon after launching

Roswell International Air Center

Project Mogul was one of dozens of similar projects and should have never been known or even suspected by the American people. Unfortunately, though, something went wrong on July 8, 1947 that forever made the experiment an integral part of American lore. On that day, one of the weather balloons crashed near Roswell Army Air Field (RAAF), and a civilian found the downed craft before the Air Force could get to it.

Poor W. W. Brazel, a New Mexico rancher, soon regretted getting his great find. He quickly became the center of a firestorm of

interest and was soon photographed and interviewed by an Associated Press reporter. During the interview, "Brazel related that on June 14 he and 8-year-old son, Vernon were about 7 or 8 miles from the ranch house of the J.B. Foster ranch, which he operates, when they came upon a large area of bright wreckage made up on (sic) rubber strips, tinfoil, a rather tough paper and sticks. At the time Brazel was in a hurry to get his round made and he did not pay much attention to it. But he did remark about what he had seen and on July 4 he, his wife, Vernon, and a daughter Betty, age 14, went back to the spot and gathered up quite a bit of the debris. The next day he first heard about the flying disks, and he wondered if what he had found might be the remnants of one of these. Monday he came to town to sell some wool and while here he went to see Sheriff George Wilcox and 'whispered kinda confidential like' that he might have found a flying disk. Wilcox got in touch with the Roswell Army Air Field and Maj. Jesse A. Marcel and a man in plain clothes accompanied him home, where they picked up the rest of the pieces of the 'disk' and went to his home to try to reconstruct it. According to Brazel they simply could not reconstruct it at all. They tried to make a kite out of it, but could not do that and could not find any way to put it back together so that it would fit. Then Major Marcel brought it to Roswell and that was the last he heard of it until the story broke that he had found a flying disk."

Brazel went on to describe what he had seen, giving a description that indicated that there was seemingly nothing at all alien about the object: "Brazel said that he did not see it fall from the sky and did not see it before it was torn up, so he did not know the size or shape it might have been, but he thought it might have been about as large as a table top. The balloon which held it up, if that was how it worked, must have been about 12 feet long, he felt,

measuring the distance by the size of the room in which he sat. The rubber was smoky gray in color and scattered over an area about 200 yards in diameter. When the debris was gathered up the tinfoil, paper, tape, and sticks made a bundle about three feet long and 7 or 8 inches thick, while the rubber made a bundle about 18 or 20 inches long and about 8 inches thick. In all, he estimated, the entire lot would have weighed maybe five pounds. There was no sign of any metal in the area which might have been used for an engine and no sign of any propellers of any kind, although at least one paper fin had been glued onto some of the tinfoil. There were no words to be found anywhere on the instrument, although there were letters on some of the parts. Considerable scotch tape and some tape with flowers printed upon it had been used in the construction. No strings or wire were to be found but there were some eyelets in the paper to indicate that some sort of attachment may have been used."

His final words, however, are perhaps the most telling, not only for himself but for anyone else who had ever found themselves suddenly caught up in their 15 minutes of fame. "Brazel said that he had previously found two weather balloons on the ranch, but that what he found this time did not in any way resemble either of these. 'I am sure what I found was not any weather observation balloon,' he said. 'But if I find anything else besides a bomb they are going to have a hard time getting me to say anything about it.'"

For her part, young Betty, Brazel's 14 year old daughter, later recalled, "The debris looked like pieces of a large balloon which had burst. The pieces were small, the largest I remember measuring about the same as the diameter of a basketball. Most of it was a kind of double-sided material, foil-like on one side and rubber-like on the other... Sticks, like kite sticks, were attacked to some of the pieces with a whitish tape. The tape was about two or

three inches wide and had flower-like designs on it. The 'flowers' were faint, a variety of pastel colors... The foil-rubber material could not be torn like ordinary aluminum foil... I do not recall anything else about the strength or other properties of what we picked up. We spent several hours collecting the debris and putting it into sacks. I believe we filled about three sacks... We speculated a bit about what the material could be. I remember dad (Mac Brazel) saying 'Oh, it's just a bunch of garbage.'"

Before he turned what he had found over to the Air Force, Brazel did what most other men in his position would have done - showing his finds off to his neighbors. Loretta Proctor, who lived near the Brazel's in 1947, rmeembered, "Brazel came to my ranch and showed my husband and me a piece of material he said came from a large pile of debris on the property he managed. 22 The piece he brought was brown in color, similar to plastic…'Mac' said the other material on the property looked like aluminum foil. It was very flexible and wouldn't crush or burn. There was also something he described as tape which had printing on it. The color of the printing was a kind of purple…."

Betty was just as anxious as her father was to show her friends what they had found. Sally Strickland, then 9 years old, later claimed, "What Bill showed us was a piece of what I still think as fabric. It was something like aluminum foil, something like satin, something like well-tanned leather in its toughness, yet was not precisely like any one of those materials. ... It was about the thickness of very fine kidskin glove leather and a dull metallic grayish silver, one side slightly darker than the other. I do not remember it having any design or embossing on it…."

Chapter 3: The Most Celebrated UFO Encounter of All Time

"Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century the subject of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) has evoked strong opinions and emotions. For some, the belief in or study of UFOs has assumed the dimensions of a religious quest. Others remain nonbelievers or at least skeptical of the existence of alien beings and elusive vehicles which never quite seem to manifest themselves. Regardless of one's conviction, nowhere has the debate about UFOs been more spirited than over the events that unfolded near the small New Mexico city of Roswell in the summer of 1947. Popularly known as the Roswell Incident, this event has become the most celebrated UFO encounter of all time and has stimulated enthusiasts like none other. Numerous witnesses, including former military personnel and respectable members of the local community, have come forward with tales of humanoid beings, alien technologies, and government cover-ups that have caused even the most skeptical observer to pause and take notice. Inevitably these stories coming from the desert have spawned countless articles, books, films, and even museums claiming to have proof that visitors had come from outer space." - The Roswell Report: Fact vs. Fiction in the New Mexico Desert, a report made by the United States Air Force in 1995

It is possible that similar events had taken place in the past and had either gone unnoticed or been written off by witnesses as nothing unusual, but this one occurred in 1947, a time when interest in UFOs was growing every day. Thus, the incident not only made the papers but arrived there with an entirely different spirit. The Roswell Daily Record, a small paper hoping to get a big scoop, reported on July 8 with a headline that read "RAAF Captures Flying Saucer On Ranch In Roswell Region." The story

said, “The intelligence office of the 509th Bombardment group at Roswell Army Air Field announced at noon today, that the field has come into possession of a flying saucer. According to information released by the department, over authority of Maj. J. A. Marcel, intelligence officer, the disk was recovered on a ranch in the Roswell vicinity, after an unidentified rancher had notified Sheriff Geo. Wilcox, here, that he had found the instrument on his premises. Major Marcel and a detail from his department went to the ranch and recovered the disk, it was stated. After the intelligence officer here had inspected the instrument it was flown to higher headquarters. The intelligence office stated that no details of the saucer's construction or its appearance had been revealed.”

Of course, the question arises as to why the government issued a press release for something they were trying to cover-up. The answer came in the next paragraph. “Mr. and Mrs. Dan Wilmot apparently were the only persons in Roswell who seen what they thought was a flying disk. They were sitting on their porch at 105 South Penn. last Wednesday night at about ten o'clock when a large glowing object zoomed out of the sky from the southeast, going in a northwesterly direction at a high rate of speed. Wilmot called Mrs. Wilmot's attention to it and both ran down into the yard to watch. It was in sight less then a minute, perhaps 40 or 50 seconds, Wilmot estimated. Wilmot said that it appeared to him to be about 1,500 feet high and going fast. He estimated between 400 and 500 miles per hour. In appearance it looked oval in shape like two inverted saucers, faced mouth to mouth, or like two old type washbowls placed, together in the same fashion. The entire body glowed as though light were showing through from inside, though not like it would inside, though not like it would be if a light were merely underneath. From where he stood Wilmot said that the object looked to be about 5 feet in size, and making allowance for

the distance it was from town he figured that it must have been 15 to 20 feet in diameter, though this was just a guess. Wilmot said that he heard no sound but that Mrs. Wilmot said she heard a swishing sound for a very short time. The object came into view from the southeast and disappeared over the treetops in the general vicinity of Six Mile Hill."

In looking at the final paragraph of the article, it appears that the Air Force would have indeed liked to keep the incident a secret, but that it had a backup plan just in case the information got out. According to the Daily Record, "Wilmot, who is one of the most respected and reliable citizens in town, kept the story to himself hoping that someone else would come out and tell about having seen one, but finally today decided that he would go ahead and tell about it. The announcement that the RAAF was in possession of one came only a few minutes after he decided to release the details of what he had seen."

What happened next was indeed a cover-up, just not the one that so many have since wanted to believe in. The Air Force, having allowed one of its most secret items to fall into public hands, decided to cover the story up by claiming it was a UFO. In 1947, this likely seemed to be a good idea, operating under the theory that people would be distracted by the excitement and then lose interest, allowing the Air Force to go on with its work unnoticed. However, things had gotten more complicated when a civilian recovered the remains of the balloon.

The following day, the Daily Record published another story, clarifying what had been found. "An examination by the army revealed last night that mysterious objects found on a lonely New Mexico ranch was a harmless high-altitude weather balloon - not a grounded flying disk. Excitement was high until Brig. Gen. Roger

M. Ramey, commander of the Eighth Air Forces with headquarters here cleared up the mystery. The bundle of tinfoil, broken wood beams and rubber remnants of a balloon were sent here yesterday by Army Air transport in the wake of reports that it was a flying disk. But the general said the objects were the crushed remains of a ray wind target used to determine the direction and velocity of winds at high altitudes. Warrant Officer Irving Newton, forecaster at the Army Air Forces weather station here said, "we use them because they go much higher than the eye can see." The weather balloon was found several days ago near the center of New Mexico by Rancher W. W. Brazel. He said he didn't think much about it until he went into Corona, N. M., last Saturday and heard the flying disk reports. He returned to his ranch, 85 miles northwest of Roswell, and recovered the wreckage of the balloon, which he had placed under some brush. Then Brazel hurried back to Roswell, where he reported his find to the sheriff's office. The sheriff called the Roswell air field and Maj. Jesse A. Marcel, 509th bomb group intelligence officer was assigned to the case. Col. William H. Blanchard, commanding officer of the bomb group, reported the find to General Ramey and the object was flown immediately to the army air field here. Ramey went on the air here last night to announce the New Mexico discovery was not a flying disk. Newton said that when rigged up, the instrument "looks like a six-pointed star, is silvery in appearance and rises in the air like a kite."

General William H. Blanchard

By this time, excitement about the discovery had spread not just across the United States but around the world. The story concluded, “In Roswell, the discovery set off a flurry of excitement. Sheriff George Wicox's telephone lines were jammed. Three calls came from England, one of them from The London Daily Mail, he said. A public relations officer here said the balloon was in his office "and it'll probably stay right there." Newton, who

made the examination, said some 80 weather stations in the U. S. were using that type of balloon and that it could have come from any of them. He said he had sent up identical balloons during the invasion of Okinawa to determine ballistics information for heavy guns."

Chapter 4: Of Major Concern

"The Air Force research found absolutely no indication that what happened near Roswell in 1947, involved any type of extraterrestrial spacecraft. This, of course, is the crux of this entire matter. "Pro-UFO persons who obtain a copy of this report, at this point, most probably begin the "cover-up is still on" claims. Nevertheless, the research indicated absolutely no evidence of any kind that a spaceship crashed near Roswell or that any alien occupants were recovered therefrom, in some secret military operation or otherwise. This does not mean, however, that the early Air Force was not concerned about UFOs. However, in the early days, UFO meant Unidentified Flying Object, which literally translated as some object in the air that was not readily identifiable. It did not mean, as the term has evolved in today's language, to equate to alien spaceships. Records from the period reviewed by Air Force researchers, as well as those cited by the authors mentioned before, do indicate that the USAF was seriously concerned about the inability to adequately identify unknown flying objects reported in American airspace. All the records, however, indicated that the focus of concern was not on aliens, hostile or otherwise, but on the Soviet Union. Many documents from that period speak to the possibility of developmental secret Soviet aircraft overflying US airspace. This, of course, was of major concern to the fledgling USAF, whose job it was to protect these same skies." - The Roswell Report: Fact vs. Fiction in the New Mexico Desert, a report made by the United States Air Force in 1995

Once the materials were back at the Air Force base, they had to be processed. It was then that the question arose as to the nature of the debris found, and whether it actually was unlike anything

available on Earth. J. Bond Johnson, a photographer for the Star-Telegraph, was brought into Ramey's office to photograph the debris found. There he helped the general unpack several packages of collected items, and he later admitted, "There is NO dispute that the pictures taken of Major Marcel were staged. I staged them. It has been published repeatedly that I helped to unpack the 'flying saucer' crash debris that Marcel couriered from Roswell to Fort Worth on orders of General Ramey. Then I 'posed' -- arranged, displayed -- the junk in an attempt to make a meaningful photo record and then took the six famous pictures of Major Marcel, General Ramey and Colonel [DuBose] examining the debris."

By the time he finished and returned with the film to his office, word had spread about the event and the newspaper was getting calls from around the country from people looking for photographs of what many were calling "The Roswell Flying Disk."

According to Jesse A. Marcel, MD, who was shown the debris by his father when he was still a child, "There were three categories of debris: a thick, foil like metallic gray substance; a brittle, brownish-black plastic like material, like Bakelite; and there were fragments of what appeared to be I-beams. On the inner surface of the I-beam, there appeared to be a type of writing. This writing was a purple-violet hue, and it had an embossed appearance. The figures were composed of curved, geometric shapes. It had no resemblance to Russian, Japanese or any other foreign language. It resembled hieroglyphics, but it had no animal-like characters…."

The writing described here remains a popular topic with those that believe that the designs described represented some sort of alien writing. However, this theory presupposes a number of far from proven ideas about alien life, most obviously the concept that

creatures springing from another world would nonetheless record their ideas in a way similar to human beings. Many have also challenged how the imagination of an 11 year old boy who was surrounded with by then nearly daily stories of extraterrestial life might have influenced what he later recalled.

The Air Force men involved, however, are another story, and Robert R. Porter, then a B-29 flight Engineer, later recalled, "On this occasion, I was a member of the crew which flew parts of what we were told was a flying saucer to Fort Worth. … After we arrived, the material was transferred to a B-25. I was told they were going to Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio. I was involved in loading the B-29 with the material, which was wrapped in packages with wrapping paper. One of the pieces was triangle-shaped, about 2 1/2 feet across the bottom. The rest were in small packages, about the size of a shoe box. The brown paper was held with tape. The material was extremely lightweight. When I picked it up, it was just like picking up an empty package. We loaded the triangle shaped package and three shoe box-sized packages into the plane. All of the packages could have fit into the trunk of a car…. When we came back from lunch, they told us they had transferred the material to a B-25. They told us the material was a weather balloon, but I'm certain it wasn't a weather balloon…."

Perhaps one of the most telling statements was that made by Cavitt in 1994. He explained how he came to be involved in the incident, saying that "we heard that someone had found some debris out not too far from Roswell and it looked suspicious; it was unidentified. So, I went out and I do not recall whether Marcel went with Rickett and me; I had Rickett with me. We went out to this site. There were no, as I understand, check points or anything like that (going through guards and that sort of garbage) we went out there and we found it. It was a small amount of, as I recalled,

bamboo sticks, reflective sort of material that would, well at first glance, you would probably think it was aluminum foil, something of that type. And we gathered up some of it. I don't know whether we even tried to get all of it. It wasn't scattered; well, what I call, you know, extensively. Like, it didn't go along the ground and splatter off some here and some there. We gathered up some of it and took it back to the base and I remember I had turned it over to Marcel. As I say, I do not remember whether Marcel was there or not on the site. He could have been. We took it back to the intelligence room...in the CIC office. I thought a weather balloon. …I think they were equipped with a radio sonde or something like that, that transmitted data from, when it got up to altitude (what altitude I have no idea) and somebody on the ground received it and that way they got some information on what was happening up there. … When I saw it was too flimsy to be anything to carry people or anything of that sort. It never crossed my mind that it could be anything but a radio sonde."

It is important to note that there was a brief time when some of those on the Air Force base did in fact entertain the possibility that they had indeed found a piece of extraterrestrial debris. Warrant Officer Newton, then the base weatherman, remembered, "I received a call from someone in General Ramey's office who asked that I go to the General's office. I informed him that I was the only forecaster on duty and could not leave. Several minutes later General Ramey Himself called and said "qet your ass over here. If you don't have a car take the first one with a key". I was met at the General's office by a Lt Col or Col who told me that someone had found a flying saucer in New Mexico and they had it in the General's Office. And that a flight had been set up to send it to Wright Patterson AFB OH., but the General suspicioned that it might be meteorological equipment or something of that nature

and wanted it examined by qualified meteorological personnel. The Col and I walked into the General's office where this supposed flying saucer was lying all over the floor. As soon as I saw it, I giggled and asked if that was the flying saucer. I was told it was. Several people were in the room when I went in, among them, General Ramey, & a couple of press people, a Major, I learned to be Major Marcel and some other folks. Someone introduced Major Marcel as the person who found this material. I told them that this was a balloon and a RAWIN target. I believed this because I had seen many of these before."

In 1947 and for the rest of his life, Newton had little patience with those who wanted to believe there was more to the story than what he saw in front of him. He concluded his statement by saying, "While I was examining the debris, Major Marcel was picking up pieces of the target sticks and trying to convince me that some notations on the sticks were alien writings. There were figures on the sticks lavender or pink in color, appeared to be weather faded markings, with no rhyme or reason. He did not convince me these were alien writings. I was convinced at the time that this was a balloon with a RAWIN target and .remain convinced. I remember hearing the General tell someone to cancel the flight the flight to Wright Patterson. While in the office several pictures were taken of Major Marcel, General Ramey, myself and others. I was dismissed and went to my office to resume my normal duties. During the ensuing years I have been interviewed by many authors, I have been quoted and misquoted. The facts remain as indicated above. I was not influenced during the original interview, nor today, to provide anything but what I know to be true, that is, the material I saw in General Ramey's office was the remains of a balloon and a RAWIN target."

As an Air Force report done nearly 50 years after the crash in

1995 noted, “General Ramey's press conference and rancher Brazel's statement effectively ended this as a UFO-related matter until 1978, although some UFO researchers argue that there were several obtuse references to it in 1950's era literature. Roswell, for example, is not referred to in the official USAF investigation of UFOs reported in Project Bluebook or its predecessors, Project Sign and Project Grudge, which ran from 1948-1969 (which Congressman Schiff subsequently learned when he made his original inquiry). In 1978, an article appeared in a tabloid newspaper, the National Inquirer, which reported the former intelligence officer, Marcel, claimed that he had recovered UFO debris near Roswell in 1947. Also in 1978, a UFO researcher, Stanton Friedman, met with Marcel and began investigating the claims that the material Marcel handled was from a crashed UFO. Similarly, two authors, William L. Moore and Charles Berlitz, also engaged in research which led them to publish a book, The Roswell Incident, in 1980. In this book they reported they interviewed a number of persons who claimed to have been present at Roswell in 1947 and professed to be either first or second hand witnesses to strange events that supposedly occurred. Since 1978-1980, other UFO researchers, most notably Donald Schmitt and Kevin Randle, claim to have located and interviewed even more persons with supposed knowledge of unusual happenings at Roswell. These included both civilian and former military persons.”

Ever since the Roswell Crash, one thing conspiracy theorists have had to try to explain was what the government was hiding if it was truly covering something up. In addition to alien life, through the years there have been a number of other ideas put forward about what might have happened on that summer night in 1947, but it is interesting to note that each of these claims reveals

something about the concerns most prominent in the minds of Americans at the time they were made. For instance, one early theory was that a missile had crashed into the desert and that the government did not want people to know about it because of the source of its technology. The 1995 Air Force report explicitly denied this: "A crashed or errant missile, usually described as a captured German V-2 or one of its variants, is sometimes set forth as a possible explanation for the debris recovered near Roswell. Since much of this testing done at nearby White Sands was secret at the time, it would be logical to assume that the government would handle any missile mishap under tight security, particularly if the mishap occurred on private land. From the records reviewed by the Air Force, however, there was nothing located to suggest that this was the case. Although the bulk of remaining testing records are under the control of the US Army, the subject has also been very well documented over the years within Air Force records. There would be no reason to keep such information classified today. The USAF found 19 no indicators or even hints that a missile was involved in this matter."

Others have claimed that some sort of secret experimental aircraft crashed that night, and that the government hid the information in order to keep Americans and the rest of the world in the dark about its spying activities. This seemed to be a particularly plausible idea in the wake of the Francis Gary Powers spy plane incident, when he was shot down over the Soviet Union in 1960, but as the Air Force report pointed out, "Of all the things that are documented and tracked within the Air Force, among the most detailed and scrupulous are airplane crashes. In fact, records of air crashes go back to the first years of military flight. Safety records and reports are available for all crashes that involved serious damage, injury, death, or a combination of these factors.

These records also include incidents involving experimental or classified aircraft. USAF records showed that between June 24, 1947, and July 28, 1947, there were five crashes in New Mexico alone, involving A-26C, P-51N, C-82A, P-80A, and PQ-14B aircraft; however, none of these occurred on the date in question nor in the area(s) in question. One of the additional areas specifically set forth by GAO in its efforts was to deal with how the Air Force (and others) specifically documented "…weather balloon…and other crash incidents." In this area, the search efforts revealed that there are no air safety records pertaining to weather balloon crashes (all weather balloons crash sooner or later; however, there are provisions for generating reports of "crashes" as ground safety incidents in the unlikely chance that a balloon injures someone or causes damage. Such records are only maintained for five years."

One of the most potentially devastating things that could have happened at Roswell was some sort of nuclear accident. This theory reflects the concerns about nuclear power and nuclear war, both of which were at the forefront of people's minds in the 1980s. Again, the Air Force was adamant that there was nothing involving nuclear technology involved at Roswell: "One of the areas considered was that whatever happened near Roswell may have involved nuclear weapons. This was a logical area of concern since the 509th Bomb Group was the only military unit in the world at the time that had access to nuclear weapons. Again, reviews of available records gave no indication that this was the case. A number of records still classified Top Secret and Secret Restricted Data having to do with nuclear weapons were located in the Federal Records Center in St. Louis, MO. These records, which pertained to the 509th, had nothing to do with any activities that could have been misinterpreted as the "Roswell Incident." Also,

any records of a nuclear-related incident would have been inherited by the Department of Energy (DOE), and, had one occurred, it is likely DOE would have publicly reported it as part of its recent declassification and public release efforts. There were no ancillary records in Air Force files to indicate the potential existence of such records within DOE channels, however."

This, of course, leaves the most popular theory of all: that some sort of extraterrestrial ship crashed in the desert that night. However, there are several obvious flaws in this theory. For one thing, if something did happen, why wasn't the federal government more involved? Certainly, if contact had been made with alien life, President Eisenhower would have been informed and likely sent his own men to investigate. When asked about this, Cavitt insisted, "I don't remember anybody from Washington coming there. It's possible that somebody came over to talk to Marcel that I didn't even know about. … And I was not sworn into any secrecy ever about any of this stuff. … As far as I knew, I never heard anyone say, 'Don't talk about this and its hot stuff.' I think Marcel, would…have told me something."

Likewise, the Air Force report insisted, "The research revealed only one official AAF document that indicated that there was any activity of any type that pertained to UFOs and Roswell in July, 1947. This was a small section of the July Historical Report for the 509th Bomb Group and Roswell Army Air Field that stated: 'The Office of Public Information was quite busy during the month answering inquiries on the 'flying disc,' which was reported to be in possession of the 509th Bomb Group. The object turned out to be a radar tracking balloon' Additionally, this history showed that the 509th Commander, Colonel Blanchard, went on leave on July 8, 1947, which would be a somewhat unusual maneuver for a person involved in the supposed first ever recovery of

extraterrestrial materials. … The history and the morning reports also showed that the subsequent activities at Roswell during the month were mostly mundane and not indicative of any unusual high-level activity, expenditure of manpower, resources or security. Likewise, the researchers found no indication of heightened activity anywhere else in the military hierarchy in the July, 1947…. There were no indications and warnings, notice of alerts, or a higher tempo of operational activity reported that would be logically generated if an alien craft, whose intentions were unknown, entered US territory."

The author of this section of the report added somewhat humorously, "To believe that such operational and high-level security activity could be conducted solely by relying on unsecured telecommunications or personal contact without creating any records of such activity certainly stretches the imagination of those who have served in the military who know that paperwork of some kind is necessary to accomplish even emergency, highly classified, or sensitive tasks."

Chapter 5: Unsolved Mysteries

"Additionally, the Robert Stack-hosted television show 'Unsolved Mysteries' devoted a large portion of one show to a 're-creation' of the supposed Roswell events. Numerous other television shows have done likewise, particularly during the last several years and a made-for-TV movie on the subject is due to be released this summer. The overall thrust of these articles, books and shows is that the 'Roswell Incident' was actually the crash of a craft from another world, the US Government recovered it, and has been 'covering up' this fact from the American public since 1947, using a combination of disinformation, ridicule, and threats of bodily harm, to do so. Generally, the US Air Force bears the brunt of these accusations. From the rather benign description of the 'event' and the recovery of some material as described in the original newspaper accounts, the 'Roswell Incident' has since grown to mythical (if not mystical) proportions in the eyes and minds of some researchers, portions of the media and at least part of the American public. There are also now several major variations of the 'Roswell story.' For example, it was originally reported that there was only recovery of debris from one site. This has since grown from a minimal amount of debris recovered from a small area to airplane loads of debris from multiple huge 'debris fields.' Likewise, the relatively simple description of sticks, paper, tape and tinfoil has since grown to exotic metals with hieroglyphics and fiber optic-like materials." - The Roswell Report: Fact vs. Fiction in the New Mexico Desert, a report made by the United States Air Force in 1995

As had been mentioned earlier, feelings about the "Roswell Incident" tend to vary over time due to a number of competing factors. For instance, during times of national economic

downturns, interest in the incident fades as it takes a back seat to other concerns. Likewise, there is often an upswing in curiosity about the event during times of prosperity, when people have the time and resources to do research. The public's ideas about the incident also tend to ebb and flow along with the nation's overall sense of trust in its government; while people were certainly interested in alien life during the science fiction heavy days of the 1950s, their interest was generally tempered with an overall trust in their government and its ability to keep them safe. However, in the years following the turbulent 1960s and '70s, the American people became increasingly distrustful of their government. This gave rise during the late 1970s to a spate of UFO conspiracy based books, and in 1980 authors Charles Berlitz and William Moore added to their previous works on the Bermuda Triangle and the infamous Philadelphia Experiment by publishing The Roswell Incident, in which they claimed that an alien ship had indeed crashed at Roswell during a lightning storm and that all the aliens on board had been killed. The book also claimed that the alien debris had been switched with that of a weather balloon in order to cover-up what happened.

The Roswell Incident was replete with stories of hidden agendas, witness suppression and government conspiracies, and it was also published at a time when the United States economy was on the verge of improving even as much of the public still remained suspicious of the government. Therefore, it came out at a perfect time and enjoyed a decade of popularity. It would only be later that the Air Force's report denied most of the claims made in the book: "[T]he majority of the wreckage that was ultimately displayed by General Ramey and Major Marcel in the famous photos in Fort Worth was that of a radar target normally suspended from balloons. This radar target…was certainly consistent with the

description of July 9 newspaper article which discussed ‘tinfoil, paper, tape, and sticks.’ Additionally, the description of the ‘flying disc’ was consistent with a document routinely used by most pro-UFO writers to indicate a conspiracy in progress-the telegram from the Dallas FBI office of July 8, 1947. This document quoted in part states: ‘…The disc is hexagonal in shape and was suspended from a balloon by a cable, which balloon was approximately twenty feet in diameter…. the object found resembles a high altitude weather balloon with a radar reflector…disc and balloon being transported…’”

UFOs remained a hot topic throughout the 1980 and into the early ‘90s, with a man named Glenn Dennis claiming in 1989 that he had information on autopsies that had supposedly been conducted on the bodies of the alien crew members of the downed ship. Likewise, a film producer named Ray Santilli came out with his own story, claiming that “the cameraman … explained that the footage he was offering to me came from the Roswell crash, that it included debris and recovery scenes and of most importance footage of an autopsy. ... The cameraman was in his eighties and seemed a genuine enough person, he explained that from 1942 to 1952 he worked as a cameraman for the Army Air Force and Special Forces…. He explained that on June 2nd 1947 he received an order directly from General McMullan stating there had been a crash. He was to go immediately to White Sands and film everything. The cameraman had authority over and above the on-site commander and reported back only to McMullan. The cameraman flew to Roswell then was taken by road to the site he describes as being a dried up small lake bed. After hearing the story I was taken to the cameraman's house and viewed the footage. The cameraman had one reel of film that he was able to show on an old projector. He moved the projector over to a wall

and projected the image onto the wall itself. The footage was remarkable. … Unfortunately raising the money required became a problem and a few days turned into a few weeks, then a few months. … By now the cameraman was becoming very nervous and refused to take my calls. Each time I called, his wife would simply take a message. The story stops there until November of 1994 when with the money in hand I flew over without warning to buy the film and succeeded."

Obviously, there are a number of holes in his story, including the question of why he was the only one offered the film, how the owner came to possess it for decades without offering it to anyone else, and why there were no other records of the film being made. For the skeptics, these problems were enough to discredit Roselli, but for the true believers, it was just more evidence of the government's cover-up.

One seemingly valid question raised by conspiracy theorists through the years concerned why the Air Force officers who first saw the wreckage did not realize what it was. In order to answer this question, one must understand the nature of Top Secret operations. First Lieutenant James McAndrew, the Declassification and Review Officer who headed the investigation into the Roswell Incident for the Air Force, explained, "To attempt to limit unauthorized disclosure, the Air Force employed a security mechanism known as compartmentation. Compartmentation controlled access to classified information by dispersing portions of the research among several facilities and institutions. Each participating entity received only enough information necessary to accomplish its assigned tasks. In the case of MOGUL, only a small circle of Air Force officers received the intimate details that linked together these unrelated research projects. The use of compartmentation along with strict enforcement of the need to

know enabled MOGUL to remain a secret-despite its obvious security difficulties-and to remain unevaluated for many years as the cause of the Roswell Incident. … Although members of the 509th possessed high-level clearances, they were not privy to the existence of MOGUL; their job was to deliver nuclear weapons, not to detect them. The unusual combination of experimental equipment did not encourage easy identification that undoubtedly left some members of the 509th with unanswered questions."

Ironically, the details of Project Mogul were declassified in the mid-1970s at just about the time interest in UFOs was beginning to take off. Thus, as McAndrew observed, "UFO researchers, including those who are said to have known all about Mogul, apparently did not compare the descriptions of the suspect debris with that of the components of a Project MOGUL balloon train. … Had the researchers [made] even a cursory comparison, they would have found that the materials were suspiciously similar; detailed examination would have shown them to be one and the same. In the final analysis, it appears these individuals have pursued the convenient red herring provided by Roswell Army Airfield, while the real explanation lay just over the Sacramento Mountains at the MOGUL- launch site in Alamogordo."

Chapter 6: The Most Likely Source of the Wreckage

"The Air Force research did not locate or develop any information that the 'Roswell Incident' was a UFO event. All available official materials, although they do not directly address Roswell per se, indicate that the most likely source of the wreckage recovered from the Brazel Ranch was from one of the Project Mogul balloon trains. Although that project was TOP SECRET at the time, there was also no specific indication found to indicate an official pre-planned cover story was in place to explain an event such as that which ultimately happened. It appears that the identification of the wreckage as being part of a weather balloon device, as reported in the newspapers at the time, was based on the fact that there was no physical difference in the radar targets and the neoprene balloons (other than the numbers and configuration) between Mogul balloons and normal weather balloons. Additionally, it seems that there was over-reaction by Colonel Blanchard and Major Marcel, in originally reporting that a 'flying disc' had been recovered when, at that time, nobody for sure knew what that term even meant since the it had only been in use for a couple of weeks. Likewise, there was no indication in official records from the period that there was heightened military operational or security activity which should have been generated if this was, in fact, the first recovery of materials and/or persons from another world. The post-War US Military (or today's for that matter) did not have the capability to rapidly identify, recover, coordinate, cover-up, and quickly minimize public scrutiny of such an event. The claim that they did so without leaving even a little bit of a suspicious paper trail for 47 years is incredible." - The Roswell Report: Fact vs. Fiction in the New Mexico Desert, a report made by the United States Air Force in 1995

For most people, the story of Roswell remains little more than an amusing anecdote among the heavy tomes of American history, and those who hear about the "little green men" either discount the stories out of hand or take the attitude that whatever happened or did not happen had nothing to do with them. However, there are those for whom the story of the Roswell Incident and what they perceive as the government's cover-up is a life's work. These people typically live on the fringes of American society and do not have the political or social clout to influence government agencies, but in 1994, someone with an interest in Roswell rose to sufficient political power to actually get some answers. On January 14 of that year, the Washington Post reported, "Where television's 'Unsolved Mysteries' has tried and failed, the General Accounting Office is unafraid to venture. At the request of Rep. Steven Schiff (R-N.M.), Congress's investigative branch has launched a study to determine whether the government covered up a story alleging that the bodies of alien space voyagers were removed from a crashed flying saucer found near Roswell, N.M., in 1947. After the purported crash of the spacecraft, the bodies of the extraterrestrial visitors were said by a local undertaker and other conspiracy theorists to have been autopsied and secretly flown to an Air Force base in Ohio. Even though the 'Roswell Incident' has been repeatedly dismissed by the Defense Department as nothing more than UFO fantasizing triggered by the discovery of a downed weather balloon, the GAO has begun searching for documents to prove allegations that the Air Force 'suppressed' information sought by Schiff. Schiff is a member of the House Government Operations Committee, which oversees the GAO. GAO spokeswoman Laura A. Kopelson said the office's investigation, first reported in the Albuquerque Journal yesterday, stemmed from a meeting in October between Schiff and GAO Controller General Charles A. Bowsher. Schiff complained then that the Defense Department had

been ‘unresponsive’ to his inquiries about the 1947 incident. Kopelson said ‘as far as I know only one investigator had been assigned’ to the case, and that not enough work had been done to report any results to Schiff. At another point, Kopelson said ‘the people doing it are either on sick leave or are unavailable.’ She said there was no way of estimating how much the investigation would cost, and that the GAO does not release such information anyway.”

Schiff

Understandably, plenty of people were dubious about the value of having the federal government spend taxpayer money to investigate Roswell based on lingering conspiracy theories, and the article noted that the GAO “has been criticized, especially by Republicans, as the ‘lap dog of the requesters,’ producing reports that tend to support whatever conclusion the requesting member of Congress suggests.”

When asked about his reasoning for making the request, Schiff insisted he only wanted “to see if there is any evidence that information regarding UFOs had been suppressed.” According to the article, “Schiff…said that at a routine October meeting he had merely complained about the Defense Department’s lack of

responsiveness but a GAO official said, 'We're willing to take a stab at it.' Schiff, in a telephone interview from Albuquerque, said that last March, after receiving inquiries from 'UFO believers' and some Roswell residents who were in the military in 1947, he wrote Defense Secretary Les Aspin asking for more information about the reported spacecraft crash and the alleged disappearance of the aliens' bodies. … Schiff said after calling Aspin last March to request a Defense Department briefing on the Roswell incident, he received a call from an Air Force lieutenant colonel, who brusquely told him the documents had been turned over to the National Archives. However, Schiff said, Archives officials told him they did not have the records on Roswell…. That study, Schiff said, did not deal with the Roswell case. 'I was getting pretty upset at all the running around,' Schiff said, adding that at his meeting with GAO officials, 'they made an offer to help.' 'Generally, I'm a skeptic on UFOs and alien beings, but there are indications from the runaround that I got that whatever it was, it wasn't a balloon. Apparently, it's another government cover-up.' Schiff said. He called the Defense Department's lack of response 'astounding,' and said government accountability was an issue 'even larger than UFOs.' Asked if the GAO might not be extending itself, Schiff acknowledged that the agency "usually does fiscal investigations and at present I can't find a fiscal impact' in the Roswell incident. Had the agency said, ' 'This is beyond our realm of expertise,' " Schdf said, 'I wouldn't insist on it.' He added, 'If the Defense Department had been responsive, it wouldn't have come to this.'"

The GAO eventually turned the case over to the Air Force, as McAndrew explained: "In February 1994, the Air Force was informed that the General Accounting Office (GAO), an investigative agency of Congress, planned a formal audit to ascertain 'the facts regarding the reported crash of an UFO in 1949

[1947] at Roswell, New Mexico." This task was delegated to numerous agencies, but the focus was on the U.S. Air Force, the agency most often accused of hiding information and records on Roswell. The Presidential Science Advisor had also expressed an interest in the investigation. Thereupon, the Secretary of the Air Force directed that a complete records search identify, locate, and examine any and all information available on this subject. From the outset there was no predisposition to refute or overlook any information. Moreover, if any of the information discovered was under security classification, it was to be declassified, and if active or former Air Force officials had been sworn to a secrecy oath, they were to be freed from it. In short, the objective was to tell the Congress, and the American people, everything the Air Force knew about the Roswell claims. Subsequently, researchers conducted an extensive search of Air Force archives, record centers, and scientific facilities. Seeking information that might help to explain peculiar tales of odd wreckage and alien bodies, the researchers reviewed a monumental number of documents concerning a variety of events, including aircraft crashes, errant missile tests, and nuclear mishaps."

The men doing the research were the best of the best that the Air Force had to offer, having previously worked on the records related to the Vietnam War. They were neither bound by prejudice nor by any limitations on what they could report; in fact, as the above paragraph makes clear, they were under orders to tell all. They did so, just not in the way that would satisfy the average conspiracy theorist. McAndrew wrote emphatically that the report "found no evidence of any extraterrestrial craft or alien flight crew," but the report also made clear that this was not for lack of trying: "The research located no records at existing Air Force offices that indicated any cover-up" by the USAF or any indication

of such a recovery. Consequently, efforts were intensified by Air Force researchers at numerous locations where records for the period in question were stored. The records reviewed did not reveal any increase in operations, security, or any other activity in July, 1947, that indicated any such unusual event may have occurred. Records were located and thoroughly explored concerning a then Top Secret balloon project, designed to attempt to monitor Soviet nuclear tests, known as Project MOGUL. Additionally, several surviving project personnel were located and interviewed, as was the only surviving person who recovered debris from the original Roswell site in 1947 and the former officer who initially identified the wreckage as a balloon. Comparison of all information developed or obtained indicated that the material recovered near Roswell was consistent with a balloon device and most likely from one of the MOGUL balloons that had not been previously recovered. Air Force research efforts did not disclose any records of the recovery of any 'alien' bodies or extraterrestrial materials."

Despite the official imprimatur that came with the report being commissioned by the American military, it did nothing to dissuade those who wanted to believe that there was something more to the story. Even Colonel Richard Weaver, the Air Force's Director of Security and Special Program Oversight, admitted in his cover letter for the report, "The Air Force efforts did not identify any indication that the 'Roswell Incident' was any type of extraterrestrial event or that the Air Force has engaged in a 47 year conspiracy or 'coverup' of information relating to it. Therefore, it is assumed that pro-UFO groups will strongly object to the attached report and denounce it as either shortsighted or a continuation of the 'cover-up' conspiracy. Nevertheless, the attached report is a good faith effort and the first time any agency

of the government has positively responded officially to the ever-dating claims surrounding the Roswell matter."

While covering the Air Force report, the Washington Post noted just how much influence the Roswell crash has had on the local community and pop culture: "A privately owned museum in Roswell contains a number of documents and photographs purporting to prove existence of the aliens. It also displays a re-creation of the spacecraft surrounded by figures portraying the dead extraterrestrials. UFO buffs contend the incident marked the beginning of a government conspiracy to suppress evidence of alien life. Much of the speculation stems from claims by William Haut, a former Air Force public affairs officer, who said that on July 2, 1947, he was told to prepare a news release reporting the Air Force had recovered parts of a flying saucer and then was told to change the story to report a weather balloon."

Indeed, UFO research has kept the otherwise sleepy little town of Roswell, New Mexico on the map, and naturally, as interest in UFOs and conspiracy theories spread, one man saw a chance to cash in on the phenomenon. According to the website of the International UFO Museum and Research Center located in Roswell, "In early 1990, Walter Haut, who had been public information officer at Roswell Army Air Field in 1947, began promoting the idea of a home for information on the Roswell Incident and other UFO phenomena. He got together with Glenn Dennis, another Roswell Incident participant, and the two sought a home for a UFO Museum. This brought them to Roswell Realtor Max Littell, who helped find the first location for the Museum. Founders of the International UFO Museum & Research Center, incorporated as a 501c3 non-profit educational organization in 1991 and open to visitors in fall of 1992, never realized just how hungry the world was for information on the subject of their

Museum. The Museum continues to provide information to the general public on all aspects of the UFO phenomena. People from around the world travel to Roswell to see what the Museum has to offer and to simply 'be in Roswell where it happened.' Museum exhibits include information on the Roswell Incident, crop circles, UFO sightings, Area 51, ancient astronauts and abductions. The exhibits are designed not to convince anyone to believe one way or another about their subjects. Visitors are encouraged to ask questions. Many visitors come numerous times and some spend days or even weeks doing research in the library. Roswell is some 200 miles from large cities such as Amarillo, Lubbock and El Paso, Texas, and Albuquerque and Las Cruces, New Mexico. A majority of visitors make a point to come to Roswell to see the museum and to be in the city where the best-known UFO incident occurred. While in Roswell, most visitors at least buy gas and a soda, or they may spend a week learning about the phenomena and Roswell."

Not surprisingly, the museum has proven to be a boon for the town, as other businesses have been able to take advantage of the tourist trade to grow and prosper. In many ways, the modern Roswell story is, as much as anything, an excellent example of how a community can reinvent itself in beneficial ways with a stroke of luck. It is, in many ways, just as the website claims when it says, "Since its opening, the Museum has outgrown two downtown locations, finally landing in the old Plains Theater on North Main Street in Roswell. The number of visitors continues to be the envy of many other tourist attractions in the state. Each step forward is designed to improve the operations of a Museum that continues to grow dramatically. Once visitors began making their way to Roswell for more information on the 1947 incident and other UFO phenomena, a number of local residents, in conjunction with the Museum and the Roswell Chamber of Commerce, came

up with the idea to celebrate the anniversary of the Roswell Incident on the first week of July. Since 1996, the annual Roswell UFO Festival draws the curious, the silly and the serious to the community. Activities range from carnivals to trade shows, from alien costume contests to UFO lectures, from Fourth of July fireworks to a parade downtown, from Hollywood celebrities to local children in costume and on roller blades. Known UFO researchers attend to present the most up-to-date information on the subject to the curios. The Museum maintains its position as the serious side of the UFO visitors to Roswell and the surrounding areas. With the media attention and word-of-mouth advertising, people come looking for answers to specific and personal questions about UFOs or simply out of curiosity. People spend from 30 minutes to a week here."

No matter what its effect on the world in general, certainly the Roswell crash has been a boon for the community that gave the famous incident its name. For this town, as well as for many others, interest in hypothetical little green men has generated big green dollars.

The International UFO Museum and Research Center

Online Resources

Other books about American history by Charles River Editors

Other books about Area 51 on Amazon

Other books about Roswell on Amazon

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